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BALLADS OF  
A CHEECHAKO

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Ira S. Lillick



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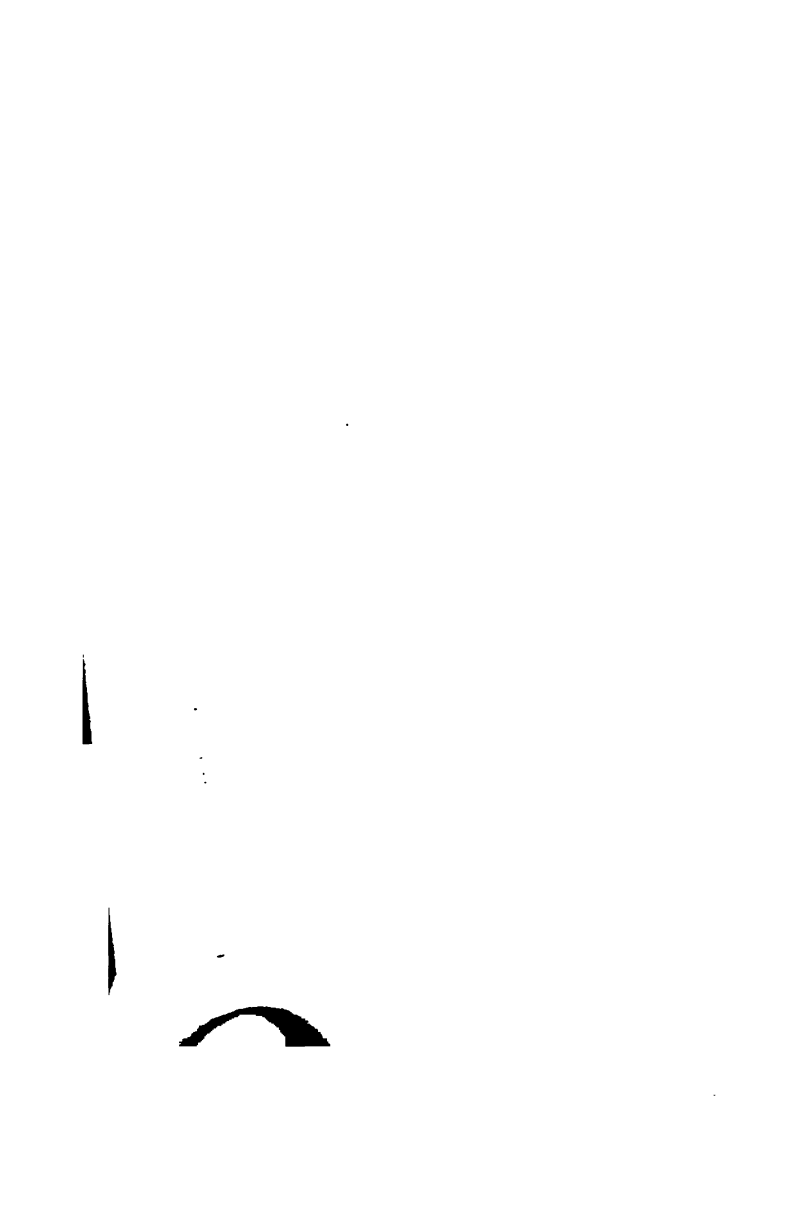
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# Ballads of a Cheechako

BY

ROBERT W. SERVICE

AUTHOR OF

"THE SPELL OF THE YUKON"



NEW YORK

BARSE & HOPKINS

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## TO THE MAN OF THE HIGH NORTH

*My rhymes are rough, and often in my rhym-  
ing  
I've drifted, silver-sailed, on seas of  
dream,  
Hearing afar the bells of Elfland chiming,  
Seeing the groves of Arcadie agleam.*

*I was the thrall of Beauty that rejoices  
From peak snow-diademed to regal star;  
Yet to mine aerie ever pierced the voices,  
The pregnant voices of the Things That  
Are.*

*The Here, the Now, the vast Forlorn around  
us;  
The gold-delirium, the ferine strife;*

---

---

## TO THE MAN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

*The lusts that lure us on, the hates that  
hound us;  
Our red rags in the patch-work quilt of  
Life.*

*The nameless men who nameless rivers  
travel,  
And in strange valleys greet strange deaths  
alone;  
The grim, intrepid ones who would unravel  
The mysteries that shroud the Polar Zone.*

*These will I sing, and if one of you linger  
Over my pages in the Long, Long Night,  
And on some lone line lay a calloused finger,  
Saying: "It's human-true—it hits me  
right;"  
Then will I count this loving toil well spent;  
Then will I dream a while—content. content.*

---

## MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

### MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH.

Men of the High North, the wild sky is  
blazing;

Islands of opal float on silver seas;  
Swift splendors kindle, barbaric, amazing;  
Pale ports of amber, golden argosies.

Ringed all around us the proud peaks are  
glowing;

Fierce chiefs in council, their wigwam the  
sky;

Far, far below us the big Yukon flowing,  
Like threaded quicksilver, gleams to the  
eye.

Men of the High North, you who have  
known it;

You in whose hearts its splendors have  
abode;

Can you renounce it, can you disown it?

Can you forget it, its glory and its goad?



---

---

## MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

Where is the hardship, where is the pain  
of it?

Lost in the limbo of things you've forgot;  
Only remain the guerdon and gain of it;  
Zest of the foray, and God, how you  
fought!

You who have made good, you foreign far-  
ing;

You money magic to far lands has  
whirled;

Can you forget those days of vast daring,  
There with your soul on the Top o' the  
World?

Nights when no peril could keep you awake  
on

Spruce boughs you spread for your couch  
in the snow;

Taste all your feasts like the beans and the  
bacon

Fried at the camp-fire at forty below?

Can you remember your huskies all going,  
Barking with joy and their brushes in air;

---

## MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

You in your parka, glad-eyed and glowing,

Monarch, your subjects the wolf and the bear?

Monarch, your kingdom unravisht and gleaming;

Mountains your throne, and a river your car;

Crash of a bull moose to rouse you from dreaming;

Forest your couch, and your candle a star.

You who this faint day the High North is luring

Unto her vastness, taintlessly sweet;

You who are steel-braced, straight-lipped, enduring,

Dreadless in danger and dire in defeat:

Honor the High North ever and ever,

Whether she crown you, or whether she slay;

Suffer her fury, cherish and love her—

He who would rule he must learn to obey.

---

## MEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

---

Men of the High North, fierce mountains  
love you ;

Proud rivers leap when you ride on their  
breast.

See, the austere sky, pensive above you,

Dons all her jewels to smile on your rest.

Children of Freedom, scornful of frontiers,

We who are weaklings honor your worth.

Lords of the wilderness, Princes of Pioneers,

Let's have a rouse that will ring round the  
earth.

---

---

THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

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THE BALLAD OF THE NORTH-  
ERN LIGHTS

One of the Down and Out—that's me. Stare  
at me well, ay, stare!

Stare and shrink—say! you wouldn't think  
that I was a millionaire?

Look at my face, it's crimped and gouged—  
one of them death-mask things;

Don't seem the sort of man, do I, as might  
be the pal of kings?

Slouching along in smelly rags, a bleary-  
eyed, no-good bum;

A knight of the hollow needle, pard, spewed  
from the sodden slum.

Look me all over from head to foot,  
how much would you think I was  
worth?

A dollar? a dime? a nickel? Why, *I'm the  
wealthiest man on earth.*

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

No, don't you think that I'm off my base.  
You'll sing a different tune  
If only you'll let me spin my yarn. Come  
over to this saloon;  
Wet my throat—it's as dry as chalk, and see-  
ing as how it's you,  
I'll tell the tale of a Northern trail, and so  
help me God, it's true.  
I'll tell of the howling wilderness and the  
haggard Arctic heights,  
Of a reckless vow that I made, and how *I*  
*staked the Northern Lights.*

Remember the year of the Big Stampede and  
the trail of Ninety-eight,  
When the eyes of the world were turned to  
the North, and the hearts of men  
elate;  
Hearts of the old dare-devil breed thrilled at  
the wondrous strike,  
And to every man who could hold a  
pan came the message, "Up and  
hike."

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## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

Well, I was there with the best of them, and  
I knew I would not fail.  
You wouldn't believe it to see me now ; but  
wait till you've heard my tale.

You've read of the trail of Ninety-eight, but  
its woe no man may tell ;  
It was all of a piece and a whole yard wide,  
and the name of the brand was "Hell."  
We heard the call and we staked our all ; we  
were plungers playing blind,  
And no man cared how his neighbor fared,  
and no man looked behind ;  
For a ruthless greed was born of need, and  
the weakling went to the wall,  
And a curse might avail where a prayer  
would fail, and the gold lust crazed us  
all.

Bold were we, and they called us three the  
"Unholy Trinity" ;  
There was Ole Olson, the sailor Swede, and  
the Dago Kid and me.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

We were the discards of the pack, the fore-  
loopers of Unrest,

Reckless spirits of fierce revolt in the fer-  
ment of the West.

We were bound to win and we revelled in  
the hardships of the way.

We staked our ground and our hopes were  
crowned, and we hoisted out the pay.

We were rich in a day beyond our dreams, it  
was gold from the grass-roots down;

But we weren't used to such sudden wealth,  
and there was the siren town.

We were crude and careless frontiersmen,  
with much in us of the beast;

We could bear the famine worthily, but we  
lost our heads at the feast.

The town looked mighty bright to us, with a  
bunch of dust to spend,

And nothing was half too good them days,  
and everyone was our friend.

Wining meant more than mining then, and  
life was a dizzy whirl,

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

Gambling and dropping chunks of gold down  
the neck of a dance-hall girl;  
Till we went clean mad, it seems to me, and  
we squandered our last poke,  
And we sold our claim, and we found our-  
selves one bitter morning—broke.

The Dago Kid he dreamed a dream of his  
mother's aunt who died—  
In the dawn-light dim she came to him, and  
she stood by his bedside,  
And she said: "Go forth to the highest  
North till a lonely trail ye find;  
Follow it far and trust your star, and fortune  
will be kind."  
But I jeered at him, and then there came the  
Sailor Swede to me,  
And he said: "I dreamed of my sister's son,  
who croaked at the age of three.  
From the herded dead he sneaked and said:  
'Seek you an Arctic trail;  
'Tis pale and grim by the Polar rim, but seek  
and ye shall not fail.'"



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## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

And lo! that night I too did dream of my  
    mother's sister's son,  
And he said to me: "By the Arctic Sea  
    there's a treasure to be won.  
Follow and follow a lone moose trail, till you  
    come to a valley grim,  
On the slope of the lonely watershed that  
    borders the Polar brim."  
Then I woke my pals, and soft we swore by  
    the mystic Silver Flail,  
'Twas the hand of Fate, and to-morrow  
    straight we would seek the lone moose  
    trail.

We watched the groaning ice wrench free,  
    crash on with a hollow din;  
Men of the wilderness were we, freed from  
    the taint of sin.  
The mighty river snatched us up and it bore  
    us swift along;  
The days were bright, and the morning light  
    was sweet with jewelled song.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

We poled and lined up nameless streams,  
portaged o'er hill and plain;  
We burnt our boat to save the nails, and built  
our boat again;  
We guessed and groped, North, ever North,  
with many a twist and turn;  
We saw ablaze in the deathless days the  
splendid sunsets burn.  
O'er soundless lakes where the grayling  
makes a rush at the clumsy fly;  
By bluffs so steep that the hard-hit sheep  
falls sheer from out the sky;  
By lilled pools where the bull moose cools  
and wallows in huge content;  
By rocky lairs where the pig-eyed bears  
peered at our tiny tent.  
Through the black canyon's angry foam we  
hurled to dreamy bars,  
And round in a ring the dog-nosed peaks  
bayed to the mocking stars.  
Spring and summer and autumn went; the  
sky had a tallow gleam,  
Yet North and ever North we pressed to the  
land of our Golden Dream.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

So we came at last to a tundra vast and dark  
and grim and lone;  
And there was the little lone moose trail, and  
we knew it for our own.  
By muskeg hollow and nigger-head it wandered  
endlessly;  
Sorry of heart and sore of foot, weary men  
were we.  
The short-lived sun had a leaden glare and  
the darkness came too soon,  
And stationed there with a solemn stare was  
the pinched, anæmic moon.  
Silence and silvern solitude till it made you  
dumbly shrink,  
And you thought to hear with an outward  
ear the things you thought to think.

Oh, it was wild and weird and wan, and ever  
in camp o' nights  
We would watch and watch the silver dance  
of the mystic Northern Lights.  
And soft they danced from the Polar sky and  
swept in primrose haze;

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

And swift they pranced with their silver feet,  
and pierced with a blinding blaze.  
They danced a cotillion in the sky; they were  
rose and silver shod;  
It was not good for the eyes of man—'twas  
a sight for the eyes of God.  
It made us mad and strange and sad, and the  
gold whereof we dreamed  
Was all forgot, and our only thought was of  
the lights that gleamed.  
Oh, the tundra sponge it was golden brown,  
and some was a bright blood-red;  
And the reindeer moss gleamed here and  
there like the tombstones of the dead.  
And in and out and around about the little  
trail ran clear,  
And we hated it with a deadly hate and we  
feared with a deadly fear.  
And the skies of night were alive with light,  
with a throbbing, thrilling flame;  
Amber and rose and violet, opal and gold it  
came.  
It swept the sky like a giant scythe, it quiv-  
ered back to a wedge;

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

Argently bright, it cleft the night with a  
wavy golden edge.

Pennants of silver waved and streamed, lazy  
banners unfurled;

Sudden splendors of sabres gleamed, light-  
ning javelins were hurled.

There in our awe we crouched and saw with  
our wild, uplifted eyes

Charge and retire the hosts of fire in the  
battlefield of the skies.

But all things come to an end at last, and the  
muskeg melted away,

And frowning down to bar our path a mud-  
dle of mountains lay.

And a gorge sheered up in granite walls, and  
the moose trail crept betwixt;

'Twas as if the earth had gaped too far and  
her stony jaws were fixt.

Then the winter fell with a sudden swoop,  
and the heavy clouds sagged low,

And earth and sky were blotted out in a  
whirl of driving snow.

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

We were climbing up a glacier in the neck of  
a mountain pass,  
When the Dago Kid slipped down and fell  
into a deep crevasse.  
When we got him out one leg hung limp, and  
his brow was wreathed with pain,  
And he says: "'Tis badly broken, boys, and  
I'll never walk again.  
It's death for all if ye linger here, and that's  
no curséd lie;  
Go on, go on while the trail is good, and  
leave me down to die."  
He raved and swore, but we tended him with  
our uncouth, clumsy care.  
The camp-fire gleamed and he gazed and  
dreamed with a fixed and curious  
stare.  
Then all at once he grabbed my gun and he  
put it to his head,  
And he says: "I'll fix it for you, boys"—  
them are the words he said.  
  
So we sewed him up in a canvas sack and we  
slung him to a tree;

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

And the stars like needles stabbed our eyes,  
and woeful men were we.

And on we went on our woeful way,  
wrapped in a daze of dream,

And the Northern Lights in the crystal  
nights came forth with a mystic  
gleam.

They danced and they danced the devil-  
dance over the naked snow ;

And soft they rolled like a tide upshoaled  
with a ceaseless ebb and flow.

They rippled green with a wondrous sheen,  
they fluttered out like a fan ;

They spread with a blaze of rose-pink rays  
never yet seen of man.

They writhed like a brood of angry snakes,  
hissing and sulphur pale ;

Then swift they changed to a dragon vast,  
lashing a cloven tail.

It seemed to us, as we gazed aloft with an  
everlasting stare,

The sky was a pit of bale and dread, and a  
monster revelled there.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

We climbed the rise of a hog-back range that  
was desolate and drear,  
When the Sailor Swede had a crazy fit, and  
he got to talking queer.  
He talked of his home in Oregon and the  
peach trees all in bloom,  
And the fern head-high, and the topaz sky,  
and the forest's scented gloom.  
He talked of the sins of his misspent life, and  
then he seemed to brood,  
And I watched him there like a fox a hare,  
for I knew it was not good.  
And sure enough in the dim dawn-light I  
missed him from the tent,  
And a fresh trail broke through the crust-  
ed snow, and I knew not where it  
went.  
But I followed it o'er the seamless waste,  
and I found him at shut of day,  
Naked there as a new-born babe—so I left  
him where he lay.

Day after day was sinister, and I fought  
fierce-eyed despair,



---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

And I clung to life, and I struggled on, I  
knew not why nor where.

I packed my grub in short relays, and I cowered  
down in my tent,

And the world around was purged of sound  
like a frozen continent.

Day after day was dark as death, but ever  
and ever at nights,

With a brilliancy that grew and grew, blazed  
up the Northern Lights.

They rolled around with a soundless sound  
like softly bruised silk;

They poured into the bowl of the sky with  
the gentle flow of milk.

In eager, pulsing violet their wheeling char-  
iots came,

Or they poised above the Polar rim like a  
coronal of flame.

From depths of darkness fathomless their  
lancing rays were hurled,

Like the all-combining search-lights of the  
navies of the world.

There on the roof-pole of the world as one  
bewitched I gazed,

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

And howled and grovelled like a beast as the  
awful splendors blazed.

My eyes were seared, yet thrall'd I peered  
through the parka hood nigh blind ;  
But I staggered on to the lights that shone,  
and never I looked behind.

There is a mountain round and low that lies  
by the Polar rim,

And I climbed its height in a whirl of light,  
and I peered o'er its jagged brim ;

And there in a crater deep and vast, un-  
gained, unguessed of men,

The mystery of the Arctic world was flashed  
into my ken.

For there these poor dim eyes of mine beheld  
the sight of sights—

That hollow ring was the source and spring  
of the mystic Northern Lights.

Then I staked that place from crown to base,  
and I hit the homeward trail.

Ah, God ! it was good, though my eyes were  
blurred, and I crawled like a sickly  
snail.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

In that vast white world where the silent sky  
communes with the silent snow,  
In hunger and cold and misery I wandered  
to and fro.

But the Lord took pity on my pain, and He  
led me to the sea,

And some ice-bound whalers heard my moan,  
and they fed and sheltered me.

They fed the feeble scarecrow thing that  
stumbled out of the wild

With the ravaged face of a mask of death  
and the wandering wits of a child—

A craven, cowering bag of bones that once  
had been a man.

They tended me and they brought me back  
to the world, and here I am.

Some say that the Northern Lights are the  
glare of the Arctic ice and snow;

And some that it's electricity, and nobody  
seems to know.

But I'll tell you now—and if I lie, may my  
lips be stricken dumb—

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

---

---

It's a *mine*, a mine of the precious stuff that  
men call radium.

It's a million dollars a pound, they say, and  
there's tons and tons in sight.

You can see it gleam in a golden stream  
in the solitudes of night.

And it's mine, all mine—and say! if you  
have a hundred plunks to spare,

I'll let you have the chance of your life, I'll  
sell you a quarter share.

You turn it down? Well, I'll make it ten,  
seeing as you are my friend.

Nothing doing? Say! don't be hard—have  
you got a dollar to lend?

Just a dollar to help me out, I know you'll  
treat me white;

I'll do as much for you some day . . . God  
bless you, sir; good-night.

---

---

THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK  
FOX SKIN

There was Claw-fingered Kitty and Windy  
Ike living the life of shame,  
When unto them in the Long, Long Night  
came the man-who-had-no-name;  
Bearing his prize of a black fox pelt, out of  
the Wild he came.

His cheeks were blanched as the flume-head  
foam when the brown spring freshets  
flow;  
Deep in their dark, sin-calcined pits were his  
sombre eyes aglow;  
They knew him far for the fitful man who  
spat forth blood on the snow.

“Did ever you see such a skin?” quoth he;  
“there’s nought in the world so fine—  
Such fullness of fur as black as the night,  
such lustre, such size, such shine;

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

It's life to a one-lunged man like me; it's  
London, it's women, it's wine.

"The Moose-hides called it the devil-fox,  
and swore that no man could kill;  
That he who hunted it, soon or late, must  
surely suffer some ill;  
But I laughed at them and their old squaw-  
tales. Ha! Ha! I'm laughing still.

"For look ye, the skin—it's as smooth as sin,  
and black as the core of the Pit.  
By gun or by trap, whatever the hap, I swore  
I would capture it;  
By star and by star afield and afar, I hunted  
and would not quit.

"For the devil-fox, it was swift and sly, and  
it seemed to flee at me;  
I would wake in fright by the camp-fire light,  
hearing its evil glee;  
Into my dream its eyes would gleam, and its  
shadow would I see.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

"It sniffed and ran from the ptarmigan I had  
poisoned to excess;

Unharm'd it sped from my wrathful lead  
('twas as if I shot by guess);

Yet it came by night in the stark moonlight  
to mock at my weariness.

"I tracked it up where the mountains hunch  
like the vertebræ of the world;

I tracked it down to the death-still pits where  
the avalanche is hurled;

From the glooms to the sacerdotal snows,  
where the carded clouds are curled.

"From the vastitudes where the world pro-  
trudes through clouds like seas up-  
shoaled,

I held its track till it led me back to the land  
I had left of old—

The land I had looted many moons. I was  
weary and sick and cold.

"I was sick, soul-sick, of the futile chase,  
and there and then I swore

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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The foul fiend fox might scathless go, for I  
would hunt no more ;

Then I rubbed mine eyes in a vast surprise—  
it stood by my cabin door.

“ A rifle raised in the wraith-like gloom, and  
a vengeful shot that sped ;

A howl that would thrill a cream-faced  
corpse — and the demon fox lay  
dead. . . .

Yet there was never a sign of wound, and  
never a drop he bled.

“ So that was the end of the great black fox,  
and here is the prize I’ve won ;

And now for a drink to cheer me up—I’ve  
mushed since the early sun ;

We’ll drink a toast to the sorry ghost of the  
fox whose race is run.”

### II.

Now Claw-fingered Kitty and Windy Ike,  
bad as the worst were they ;

In their road-house down by the river-trail  
they waited and watched for prey ;



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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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With wine and song they joyed night long,  
and they slept like swine by day.

For things were done in the Midnight Sun  
that no tongue will ever tell;  
And men there be who walk earth-free, but  
whose names are writ in hell—  
Are writ in flames with the guilty names of  
Fournier and Labelle.

Put not your trust in a poke of dust would  
ye sleep the sleep of sin;  
For there be those who would rob your  
clothes ere yet the dawn comes in;  
And a prize likewise in a woman's eyes is a  
peerless black fox skin.

Put your faith in the mountain cat if you lie  
within his lair;  
Trust the fangs of the mother-wolf, and the  
claws of the lead-ripped bear;  
But oh, of the wiles and the gold-tooth  
smiles of a dance-hall wench beware!

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

---

Wherefore it was beyond all laws that lusts  
    of man restrain,  
A man drank deep and sank to sleep never  
    to wake again;  
And the Yukon swallowed through a hole  
    the cold corpse of the slain.

### III.

The black fox skin a shadow cast from the  
    roof nigh to the floor;  
And sleek it seemed and soft it gleamed, and  
    the woman stroked it o'er;  
And the man stood by with a brooding eye,  
    and gnashed his teeth and swore.

When thieves and thugs fall out and fight  
    there's fell arrears to pay;  
And soon or late sin meets its fate, and so it  
    fell one day  
That Claw-fingered Kitty and Windy Ike  
    fanged up like dogs at bay.

"The skin is mine, all mine," she cried; "I  
    did the deed alone."

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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"It's share and share with a guilt-yoked pair," he hissed in a pregnant tone ;  
And so they snarled like malamutes over a mildewed bone.

And so they fought, by fear untaught, till  
haply it befell  
One dawn of day she slipped away to Dawson town to sell  
The fruit of sin, this black fox skin that had  
made their lives a hell.

She slipped away as still he lay, she clutched  
the wondrous fur ;  
Her pulses beat, her foot was fleet, her fear  
was as a spur ;  
She laughed with glee, she did not see him  
rise and follow her.

The bluffs uprear and grimly peer far over  
Dawson town ;  
They see its lights a blaze o' nights and  
harshly they look down ;  
They mock the plan and plot of man with  
grim, ironic frown.

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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The trail was steep; 'twas at the time when  
    swiftly sinks the snow;  
All honey-combed, the river ice was rotting  
    down below;  
The river chafed beneath its rind with many  
    a mighty throe.

And up the swift and oozy drift a woman  
    climbed in fear,  
Clutching to her a black fox fur as if she  
    held it dear;  
And hard she pressed it to her breast—then  
    Windy Ike drew near.

She made no moan—her heart was stone—  
    she read his smiling face,  
And like a dream flashed all her life's dark  
    horror and disgrace;  
A moment only—with a snarl he hurled her  
    into space.

She rolled for nigh an hundred feet; she  
    bounded like a ball;

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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From crag to crag she carromed down  
through snow and timber fall; . . .  
A hole gaped in the river ice; the spray  
flashed—that was all.

A bird sang for the joy of spring, so piercing  
sweet and frail;  
And blinding bright the land was dight in  
gay and glittering mail;  
And with a wondrous black fox skin a man  
slid down the trail.

### IV.

A wedge-faced man there was who ran along  
the river bank,  
Who stumbled through each drift and slough,  
and ever slipped and sank,  
And ever cursed his Maker's name, and ever  
"hooch" he drank.

He travelled like a hunted thing, hard har-  
ried, sore distress;  
The old grandmother moon crept out from  
her cloud-quilted nest;

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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The aged mountains mocked at him in their  
primeval rest.

Grim shadows diapered the snow ; the air  
was strangely mild ;  
The valley's girth was dumb with mirth, the  
laughter of the wild ;  
The still, sardonic laughter of an ogre o'er a  
child.

The river writhed beneath the ice ; it groaned  
like one in pain,  
And yawning chasms opened wide, and closed  
and yawned again ;  
And sheets of silver heaved on high until  
they split in twain.

From out the road-house by the trail they  
saw a man afar  
Make for the narrow river-reach where the  
swift cross-currents are ;  
Where, frail and worn, the ice is torn and  
the angry waters jar.

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THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK FOX SKIN

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But they did not see him crash and sink into  
the icy flow ;  
They did not see him clinging there, gripped  
by the undertow,  
Clawing with bleeding finger-nails at the  
jagged ice and snow.

They found a note beside the hole where he  
had stumbled in :  
“ Here met his fate by evil luck a man who  
lived in sin,  
And to the one who loves me least I leave  
this black fox skin.”

And strange it is ; for, though they searched  
the river all around,  
No trace or sign of black fox skin was ever  
after found ;  
Though one man said he saw the tread of  
*hoofs* deep in the ground.

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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### THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

*"The North has got him."—Yukonism.*

I tried to refine that neighbor of mine, honest  
to God, I did.

I grieved for his fate, and early and late I  
watched over him like a kid.

I gave him excuse, I bore his abuse in every  
way that I could;

I swore to prevail; I camped on his trail; I  
plotted and planned for his good.

By day and by night I strove in men's sight  
to gather him into the fold,

With precept and prayer, with hope and de-  
spair, in hunger and hardship and  
cold.

I followed him into Gehennas of sin, I sat  
where the sirens sit;

In the shade of the Pole, for the sake of his  
soul, I strove with the powers of the  
Pit.



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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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I shadowed him down to the scrofulous  
town; I dragged him from dissolute  
brawls;

But I killed the galoot when he started to  
shoot electricity into my walls.

God knows what I did he should seek to be  
rid of one who would save him from  
shame.

God knows what I bore that night when he  
swore and bade me make tracks from  
his claim.

I started to tell of the horrors of hell, when  
sudden his eyes lit like coals;

And "Chuck it," says he, "don't persecute  
me with your cant and your saving of  
souls."

I'll swear I was mild as I'd be with a  
child, but he called me the son of a  
slut;

And, grabbing his gun with a leap and a  
run, he threatened my face with the  
butt.

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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So what could I do (I leave it to you)? With  
    curses he harried me forth;  
Then he was alone, and I was alone, and over  
    us menaced the North.

Our cabins were near; I could see, I could  
    hear; but between us there rippled the  
    creek;  
And all summer through, with a rancor that  
    grew, he would pass me and never  
    would speak.  
Then a shuddery breath like the coming of  
    Death crept down from the peaks far  
    away;  
The water was still; the twilight was chill;  
    the sky was a tatter of gray.  
Swift came the Big Cold, and opal and gold  
    the lights of the witches arose;  
The frost-tyrant clinched, and the valley was  
    cinched by the stark and cadaverous  
    snows.  
The trees were like lace where the star-beams  
    could chase, each leaf was a jewel  
    agleam.

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### THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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The soft white hush lapped the Northland  
and wrapped us round in a crystalline  
dream ;

So still I could hear quite loud in my ear the  
swish of the pinions of time ;

So bright I could see, as plain as could be,  
the wings of God's angels ashine.

As I read in the Book I would often-  
times look to that cabin just over the  
creek.

Ah me, it was sad and evil and bad,  
two neighbors who never would  
speak !

I knew that full well like a devil in hell he  
was hatching out, early and late,  
A system to bear through the frost-spangled  
air the warm, crimson waves of his  
hate.

I only could peer and shudder and fear—  
'twas ever so ghastly and still ;

But I knew over there in his lonely despair  
he was plotting me terrible ill.

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

---

I knew that he nursed a malice accurst, like  
the blast of a winnowing flame;  
I pleaded aloud for a shield, for a shroud—  
Oh, God! then calamity came.

Mad! If I'm mad, then you too are mad; but  
it's all in the point of view.

If you'd looked at them things gallivantin'  
on wings, all purple and green and  
blue;

If you'd noticed them twist, as they mounted  
and hissed like scorpions dim in the  
dark;

If you'd seen them rebound with a horrible  
sound, and spitefully spitting a spark;

If you'd watched *It* with dread, as it hissed  
by your bed, that thing with the feel-  
ers that crawls—

You'd have settled the brute that attempted  
to shoot electricity into your walls.

Oh, some they were blue, and they slithered  
right through; they were silent and  
squashy and round;

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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And some they were green; they were  
wriggly and lean; they writhed with  
so hateful a sound.

My blood seemed to freeze; I fell on my  
knees; my face was a white splash of  
dread.

Oh, the Green and the Blue, they were grue-  
some to view; but the worst of them  
all were the Red.

They came through the door, they came  
through the floor, they came through  
the moss-creviced logs.

They were savage and dire; they were  
whiskered with fire; they bickered  
like malamute dogs.

They ravined in rings like iniquitous things;  
they gulped down the Green and the  
Blue.

I crinkled with fear whene'er they drew  
near, and nearer and nearer they  
drew.

And then came the crown of Horror's grim  
crown, the monster so loathsomely red.

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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Each eye was a pin that shot out and in, as,  
    squidlike, it oozed to my bed;  
So softly it crept with feelers that swept and  
    quivered like fine copper wire;  
Its belly was white with a sulphurous light,  
    its jaws were a-drooling with fire.  
It came and it came; I could breathe of  
    its flame, but never a wink could I  
    look.  
I thrust in its maw the Fount of the Law; I  
    fended it off with the Book.  
I was weak—oh, so weak—but I thrilled at  
    its shriek, as wildly it fled in the  
    night;  
And deathlike I lay till the dawn of the day.  
    (Was ever so welcome the light?)

I loaded my gun at the rise of the sun; to  
    his cabin so softly I slunk.  
My neighbor was there in the frost-freighted  
    air, all wrapped in a robe in his bunk.  
It muffled his moans; it outlined his bones,  
    as feebly he twisted about;

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## THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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His gums were so black, and his lips seemed  
to crack, and his teeth all were loos-  
ening out.

'Twas a death's head that peered through the  
tangle of beard; 'twas a face I will  
never forget;

Sunk eyes full of woe, and they troubled me  
so with their pleadings and anguish,  
and yet

As I rested my gaze in a misty amaze on the  
scurvy-degenerate wreck,

I thought of the Things with the dragon-fly  
wings, then laid I my gun on his neck.

He gave out a cry that was faint as a sigh,  
like a perishing malamute,

And he says unto me, "I'm converted," says  
he; "for Christ's sake, Peter, don't  
shoot!"

\* \* \* \* \*

They're taking me out with an escort about,  
and under a sergeant's care;

I am humbled indeed, for I'm 'cuffed to a  
Swede that thinks he's a millionaire.

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THE BALLAD OF PIOUS PETE

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But it's all Gospel true what I'm telling  
you—up there where the Shad  
falls—

That I settled Sam Noot when he started  
shoot electricity into my walls.



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THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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THE BALLAD OF BLASPHE-  
MOUS BILL

I took a contract to bury the body of blas-  
phemous Bill MacKie,  
Whenever, wherever or whatsoever the man-  
ner of death he die—  
Whether he die in the light o' day or under  
the peak-faced moon;  
In cabin or dance-hall, camp or dive, muck-  
lucks or patent shoon;  
On velvet tundra or virgin peak, by glacier,  
drift or draw;  
In muskeg hollow or canyon gloom, by ava-  
lanche, fang or claw;  
By battle, murder or sudden wealth, by pesti-  
lence, hooch or lead—  
I swore on the Book I would follow and look  
till I found my tombless dead.

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## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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For Bill was a dainty kind of cuss, and his  
mind was mighty sot  
On a dinky patch with flowers and grass in a  
civilized bone-yard lot.  
And where he died or how he died, it didn't  
matter a damn  
So long as he had a grave with frills and a  
tombstone "epigram."  
So I promised him, and he paid the price in  
good cheechako coin  
(Which the same I blowed in that very night  
down in the Tenderloin).  
Then I painted a three-foot slab of pine:  
"Here lies poor Bill MacKie,"  
And I hung it up on my cabin wall and I  
waited for Bill to die.

Years passed away, and at last one day came  
a squaw with a story strange,  
Of a long-deserted line of traps 'way back  
of the Bighorn range;  
Of a little hut by the great divide, and a  
white man stiff and still,

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## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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Lying there by his lonesome self, and I figured it must be Bill.

So I thought of the contract I'd made with him, and I took down from the shelf  
The swell black box with the silver plate he'd picked out for himself;

And I packed it full of grub and "hooch,"  
and I slung it on the sleigh;

Then I harnessed up my team of dogs and  
was off at dawn of day.

You know what it's like in the Yukon wild  
when it's sixty-nine below;

When the ice-worms wriggle their purple  
heads through the crust of the pale  
blue snow;

When the pine-trees crack like little guns in  
the silence of the wood,

And the icicles hang down like tusks under  
the parka hood;

When the stove-pipe smoke breaks sudden  
off, and the sky is weirdly lit,

And the careless feel of a bit of steel burns  
like a red-hot spit;

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## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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When the mercury is a frozen ball, and the  
frost-fiend stalks to kill—

Well, it was just like that that day when I  
set out to look for Bill.

Oh, the awful hush that seemed to crush me  
down on every hand,

As I blundered blind with a trail to find  
through that blank and bitter land;

Half dazed, half crazed in the winter wild,  
with its grim heart-breaking woes,

And the ruthless strife for a grip on life that  
only the sourdough knows!

North by the compass, North I pressed; river  
and peak and plain

Passed like a dream I slept to lose and I  
waked to dream again.

River and plain and mighty peak—and who  
could stand unawed?

As their summits blazed, he could stand un-  
dazed at the foot of the throne of God.

North, aye, North, through a land accurst,  
shunned by the scouring brutes,

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## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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And all I heard was my own harsh word and  
the whine of the malamutes,  
Till at last I came to a cabin squat, built in  
the side of a hill,  
And I burst in the door, and there on the  
floor, frozen to death, lay Bill.

Ice, white ice, like a winding-sheet, sheath-  
ing each smoke-grimed wall;  
Ice on the stove-pipe, ice on the bed, ice  
gleaming over all;  
Sparkling ice on the dead man's chest, glit-  
tering ice in his hair,  
Ice on his fingers, ice in his heart, ice in his  
glassy stare;  
Hard as a log and trussed like a frog, with  
his arms and legs outspread.  
I gazed at the coffin I'd brought for him, and  
I gazed at the gruesome dead,  
And at last I spoke: "Bill liked his joke;  
but still, goldarn his eyes,  
A man had ought to consider his mates in  
the way he goes and dies."

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## THE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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Have you ever stood in an Arctic hut in the  
shadow of the Pole,  
With a little coffin six by three and a grief  
you can't control?  
Have you ever sat by a frozen corpse that  
looks at you with a grin,  
And that seems to say: "You may try all  
day, but you'll never jam me in"?  
I'm not a man of the quitting kind, but I  
never felt so blue  
As I sat there gazing at that stiff and study-  
ing what I'd do.  
Then I rose and I kicked off the husky dogs  
that were nosing round about,  
And I lit a roaring fire in the stove, and I  
started to thaw Bill out.

Well, I thawed and thawed for thirteen days,  
but it didn't seem no good;  
His arms and legs stuck out like pegs, as if  
they was made of wood.  
Till at last I said: "It ain't no use—he's  
froze too hard to thaw;

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## HE BALLAD OF BLASPHEMOUS BILL

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e's obstinate, and he won't lie straight, so I  
guess I got to—*saw*.”  
so I sawed off poor Bill's arms and legs, and  
I laid him snug and straight  
In the little coffin he picked hisself, with the  
dinky silver plate;  
And I came nigh near to shedding a tear as  
I nailed him safely down;  
Then I stowed him away in my Yukon sleigh,  
and I started back to town.

So I buried him as the contract was in a  
narrow grave and deep,  
And there he's waiting the Great Clean-up,  
when the Judgment sluice-heads  
sweep;  
And I smoke my pipe and I meditate in the  
light of the Midnight Sun,  
And sometimes I wonder if they *was*, the  
awful things I done.  
And as I sit and the parson talks, expound-  
ing of the Law,  
I often think of poor old Bill—and *how hard*  
*he was to saw*.

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THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED  
MIKE

*This is the tale that was told to me by the  
man with the crystal eye,  
As I smoked my pipe in the camp-fire light,  
and the Glories swept the sky;  
As the Northlights gleamed and curved and  
streamed, and the bottle of "hooch"  
was dry.*

A man once aimed that my life be shamed,  
and wrought me a deathly wrong;  
I vowed one day I would well repay, but the  
heft of his hate was strong.  
He thonged me East and he thonged me  
West; he harried me back and forth,  
Till I fled in fright from his peerless spite to  
the bleak, bald-headed North.



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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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And there I lay, and for many a day I  
hatched plan after plan,  
For a golden haul of the wherewithal to  
crush and to kill my man ;  
And there I strove, and there I clove through  
the drift of icy streams ;  
And there I fought, and there I sought for  
the paystreak of my dreams.

So twenty years, with their hopes and fears  
and smiles and tears and such,  
Went by and left me long bereft of hope of  
the Midas touch ;  
About as fat as a chancel rat, and lo ! de-  
spite my will,  
In the weary fight I had clean lost sight of  
the man I sought to kill.

'Twas so far away, that evil day when I  
prayed the Prince of Gloom  
For the savage strength and the sullen length  
of life to work his doom.

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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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Nor sign nor word had I seen or heard, and  
it happed so long ago;  
My youth was gone and my memory wan,  
and I willed it even so.

It fell one night in the waning light by the  
Yukon's oily flow,  
I smoked and sat as I marvelled at the sky's  
port-winey glow;  
Till it paled away to an absinthe gray, and  
the river seemed to shrink,  
All wobbly flakes and wriggling snakes and  
goblin eyes a-wink.

'Twas weird to see and it 'wilderred me in a  
queer, hypnotic dream,  
Till I saw a spot like an inky blot come float-  
ing down the stream;  
It bobbed and swung; it sheered and hung;  
it romped round in a ring;  
It seemed to play in a tricksome way; it sure  
was a merry thing.

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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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In freakish flights strange oily lights came  
    fluttering round its head,  
Like butterflies of a monster size—then I  
    knew it for the Dead.  
Its face was rubbed and slicked and scrubbed  
    as smooth as a shaven pate;  
In the silver snakes that the water makes it  
    gleamed like a dinner-plate.

It gurgled near, and clear and clear and large  
    and large it grew;  
It stood upright in a ring of light and it  
    looked me through and through.  
It weltered round with a woozy sound, and  
    ere I could retreat,  
With the witless roll of a sodden soul it wan-  
    toned to my feet.

And here I swear by this Cross I wear, I  
    heard that “floater” say:  
“I am the man from whom you ran, the man  
    you sought to slay.

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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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That you may note and gaze and gloat, and  
say 'Revenge is sweet,'  
In the grit and grime of the river's slime I  
am rotting at your feet.

"The ill we rue we must e'en undo, though it  
rive us bone from bone;  
So it came about that I sought you out, for  
I prayed I might atone.  
I did you wrong, and for long and long I  
sought where you might live;  
And now you're found, though I'm dead and  
drowned, I beg you to forgive."

So sad it seemed, and its cheek-bones  
gleamed, and its fingers flicked the  
shore;  
And it lapped and lay in a weary way, and  
its hands met to implore;  
That I gently said: "Poor, restless dead, I  
would never work you woe;  
Though the wrong you rue you can ne'er  
undo, I forgave you long ago."

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## THE BALLAD OF ONE-EYED MIKE

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Then, wonder-wise, I rubbed my eyes and I  
    woke from a horrid dream.  
The moon rode high in the naked sky, and  
    something bobbed in the stream.  
It held my sight in a patch of light, and then  
    it sheered from the shore;  
It dipped and sank by a hollow bank, and I  
    never saw it more.

*This was the tale he told to me, that man so  
    warped and gray,  
Ere he slept and dreamed, and the camp-fire  
    gleamed in his eye in a wolfish way—  
That crystal eye that raked the sky in the  
    weird Auroral ray.*

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

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### THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

'Twas up in a land long famed for gold,  
where women were far and rare,  
Tellus, the smith, had taken to wife a maiden  
amazingly fair ;  
Tellus, the brawny worker in iron, hairy and  
heavy of hand,  
Saw her and loved her and bore her away  
from the tribe of a Southern land ;  
Deeming her worthy to queen his home and  
mother his little ones,  
That the name of Tellus, the master smith,  
might live in his stalwart sons.

Now there was little of law in the land, and  
evil doings were rife,  
And every man who joyed in his home  
guarded the fame of his wife ;

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

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For there were those of the silver tongue and  
the honeyed art to beguile,  
Who would cozen the heart from a woman's  
breast and damn her soul with a smile.  
And there were women too quick to heed a  
look or a whispered word,  
And once in a while a man was slain, and the  
ire of the King was stirred;  
So far and wide he proclaimed his wrath, and  
this was the law he willed:  
"That whosoever killeth a man, even shall he  
be killed."

Now Tellus, the smith, he trusted his wife;  
his heart was empty of fear.  
High on the hill was the gleam of their  
hearth, a beacon of love and cheer.  
High on the hill they builded their bower,  
where the broom and the bracken  
meet;  
Under a grave of oaks it was, hushed and  
drowsily sweet.  
Here he enshrined her, his dearest saint, his  
idol, the light of his eye;

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Her kisses rested upon his lips as brushes a butterfly.

The weight of her arms around his neck was light as the thistle down;

And sweetly she studied to win his smile,  
and gently she mocked his frown.

And when at the close of the dusty day his clangorous toil was done,

She hastened to meet him down the way all lit by the amber sun.

Their dove-cot gleamed in the golden light,  
a temple of stainless love;

Like the hanging cup of a big blue flower was the topaz sky above.

The roses and lilies yearned to her, as swift through their throng she pressed;

A little white, fragile, fluttering thing that lay like a child on his breast.

Then the heart of Tellus, the smith, was proud, and sang for the joy of life,

And there in the bronzing summertide he thanked the gods for his wife.



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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Now there was one called Philo, a scribe, a  
man of exquisite grace,  
Carved like the god Apollo in limb, fair as  
Adonis in face;  
Eager and winning of manner, full of such  
radiant charm,  
Womenkind fought for his favor and loved  
to their uttermost harm.  
Such was his craft and his knowledge, such  
was his skill at the game,  
Never was woman could flout him, so be he  
plotted her shame.  
And so he drank deep of pleasure, and then  
it fell on a day  
He gazed on the wife of Tellus and marked  
her out for his prey.

Tellus, the smith, was merry, and the time  
of the year it was June,  
So he said to his stalwart helpers: "Shut  
down the forge at noon.  
Go ye and joy in the sunshine, rest in the  
coolth of the grove,

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Drift on the dreamy river, every man with  
his love."

Then to himself: "Oh, Beloved, sweet will  
be your surprise;

To-day will we sport like children, laugh in  
each other's eyes;

Weave gay garlands of poppies, crown each  
other with flowers,

Pull plump carp from the lilies, rifle the  
ferny bowers.

To-day with feasting and gladness the wine  
of Cyprus will flow;

To-day is the day we were wedded only a  
twelve-month ago."

The larks trilled high in the heavens; his  
heart was lyric with joy;

He plucked a posy of lilies; he sped like a  
love-sick boy.

He stole up the velvety pathway—his cot-  
tage was sunsteeped and still;

Vines honeysuckled the window; softly he  
peeped o'er the sill.

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

The lilies dropped from his fingers; devils  
were choking his breath;

Rigid with horror, he stiffened; ghastly his  
face was as death.

Like a nun whose faith in the Virgin is met  
with a prurient jibe,

He shrank—'twas the wife of his bosom in  
the arms of Philo, the scribe.

Tellus went back to his smithy; he reeled  
like a drunken man;

His heart was riven with anguish; his brain  
was brooding a plan.

Straight to his anvil he hurried; started his  
furnace aglow;

Heated his iron and shaped it with savage  
and masterful blow.

Sparks showered over and round him;  
swiftly under his hand

There at last it was finished—a hideous and  
infamous Brand.

That night the wife of his bosom, the light  
of joy in her eyes,

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Kissed him with words of rapture; but he  
knew that her words were lies.  
Never was she so beguiling, never so merry  
of speech  
(For passion ripens a woman as the sun-  
shine ripens a peach).  
He clenched his teeth into silence; he  
yielded up to her lure,  
Though he knew that her breasts were heav-  
ing from the fire of her paramour.  
"To-morrow," he said, "to-morrow"—he  
wove her hair in a strand,  
Twisted it round his fingers and smiled as  
he thought of the Brand.

The morrow was come, and Tellus swiftly  
stole up the hill.  
Butterflies drowsed in the noon-heat; cov-  
erts were sunsteeped and still.  
Softly he padded the pathway unto the  
porch, and within  
Heard he the low laugh of dalliance, heard  
he the rapture of sin.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Knew he her eyes were mystic with light  
that no man should see,  
No man kindle and joy in, no man on earth  
save he.  
And never for him would it kindle. The  
blood-lust surged in his brain;  
Through the senseless stone could he see  
them, wanton and warily fain.  
Horrible! Heaven he sought for, gained it  
and gloried and fell—  
Oh, it was sudden—headlong into the neth-  
ermost hell. . . .

Was this he, Tellus, this marble? Tellus  
. . . not dreaming a dream?  
Ah! sharp-edged as a javelin, was that a  
woman's scream?  
Was it a door that shattered, shell-like, un-  
der his blow?  
Was it his saint, that strumpet, dishevelled  
and cowering low?  
Was it her lover, that wild thing, that  
twisted and gouged and tore?

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## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Was it a man he was crushing, whose head  
he beat on the floor?  
Laughing the while at its weakness, till sudden  
he stayed his hand—  
Through the red ring of his madness flamed  
the thought of the Brand.

Then bound he the naked Philo with thongs  
that cut in the flesh,  
And the wife of his bosom, fear-frantic, he  
gagged with a silken mesh,  
Choking her screams into silence; bound her  
down by the hair;  
Dragged her lover unto her under her fren-  
zied stare.  
In the heat of the hearth-fire embers he  
heated the hideous Brand;  
Twisting her fingers open, he forced its haft  
in her hand.  
He pressed it downward and downward; she  
felt the living flesh sear;  
She saw the throe of her lover; she heard  
the scream of his fear.

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

Once, twice and thrice he forced her, heed-  
less of prayer and shriek—

Once on the forehead of Philo, twice in the  
soft of his cheek.

Then (for the thing was finished) he said to  
the woman: "See

How you have branded your lover! Now  
will I let him go free."

He severed the thongs that bound him,  
laughing: "Revenge is sweet,"

And Philo, sobbing in anguish, feebly rose to  
his feet.

The man who was fair as Apollo, god-like  
in woman's sight,

Hideous now as a satyr, fled to the pity of  
night.

*Then came they before the Judgment Seat,  
and thus spoke the Lord of the Land:*

*"He who seeketh his neighbor's wife shall  
suffer the doom of the Brand.*

*Brutish and bold on his brow be it stamped,  
deep in his cheek let it sear,*

---

## THE BALLAD OF THE BRAND

---

*That every man may look on his shame, and  
shudder and sicken and fear.  
He shall hear their mock in the market-place,  
their fleering jibe at the feast;  
He shall seek the caves and the shroud of  
night, and the fellowship of the beast.  
Outcast forever from homes of men, far and  
far shall he roam.  
Such be the doom, sadder than death, of him  
who shameth a home."*



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THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

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THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK  
HENRY

Now wouldn't you expect to find a man an  
awful crank  
That's staked out nigh three hundred claims,  
and every one a blank;  
That's followed every fool stampede, and  
seen the rise and fall  
Of camps where men got gold in chunks and  
he got none at all;  
That's prospected a bit of ground and sold it  
for a song  
To see it yield a fortune to some fool that  
came along;  
That's sunk a dozen bed-rock holes, and not  
a speck in sight,  
Yet sees them take a million from the claims  
to left and right?

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## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

---

Now aren't things like that enough to drive  
a man to booze?

But Hard-Luck Smith was hoodoo-proof—  
he knew the way to lose.

'Twas in the fall of nineteen four—leap-year  
I've heard them say—

When Hard-Luck came to Hunker Creek  
and took a hillside lay.

And lo! as if to make amends for all the  
futile past,

Late in the year he struck it rich, the real  
paystreak at last.

The riffles of his sluicing-box were choked  
with speckled earth,

And night and day he worked that lay for all  
that he was worth.

And when in chill December's gloom his  
lucky lease expired,

He found that he had made a stake as big as  
he desired.

One day while meditating on the wayward-  
ness of fate,

---

## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

---

He felt the ache of lonely man to find a fitting mate;

A petticoated pard to cheer his solitary life,  
A woman with soft, soothing ways, a confidant, a wife.

And while he cooked his supper on his little Yukon stove,

He wished that he had staked a claim in Love's rich treasure-trove;

When suddenly he paused and held aloft a Yukon egg,

For there in pencilled letters was the magic name of Peg.

You know these Yukon eggs of ours—some pink, some green, some blue—

A dollar per, assorted tints, assorted flavors, too.

The supercilious cheechako might designate them high,

But one acquires a taste for them and likes them by-and-by.

Well, Hard-Luck Henry took this egg and held it to the light,

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## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

---

And there was more faint pencilling that  
sorely taxed his sight.

At last he made it out, and then the legend  
ran like this—

“Will Klondike miner write to Peg, Plum-  
hollow, Squashville, Wis.?”

That night he got to thinking of this far-off,  
unknown fair;

It seemed so sort of opportune, an answer  
to his prayer.

She flitted sweetly through his dreams, she  
haunted him by day,

She smiled through clouds of nicotine, she  
cheered his weary way.

At last he yielded to the spell; his course of  
love he set—

Wisconsin his objective point; his object,  
Margaret.

With every mile of sea and land his longing  
grew and grew.

He practised all his pretty words, and these,  
I fear, were few.

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## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

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At last, one frosty evening, with a cold chill  
    down his spine,  
He found himself before her house, the  
    threshold of the shrine.  
His courage flickered to a spark, then glowed  
    with sudden flame—  
He knocked; he heard a welcome word; she  
    came—his goddess came.  
Oh, she was fair as any flower, and huskily  
    he spoke:  
“I’m all the way from Klondike, with a  
    mighty heavy poke.  
I’m looking for a lassie, one whose Christian  
    name is Peg,  
Who sought a Klondike miner and who  
    wrote it on an egg.”

The lassie gazed at him a space, her cheeks  
    grew rosy red;  
She gazed at him with tear-bright eyes, then  
    tenderly she said:  
“Yes, lonely Klondike miner, it is true my  
    name is Peg.

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## THE BALLAD OF HARD-LUCK HENRY

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It's also true I longed for you and wrote it  
on an egg.

My heart went out to someone in that land  
of night and cold;

But oh, I fear that Yukon egg must have  
been mighty old.

I waited long, I hoped and feared; you  
should' have come before;

I've been a wedded woman now for eighteen  
months or more.

I'm sorry, since you've come so far, you ain't  
the one that wins;

But won't you take a step inside—*I'll let you  
see the twins.*"

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## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

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### THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

He's the man from Eldorado, and he's just  
arrived in town,

In moccasins and oily buckskin shirt.

He's gaunt as any Indian, and pretty nigh as  
brown;

He's greasy, and he smells of sweat and  
dirt.

He sports a crop of whiskers that would  
shame a healthy hog;

Hard work has racked his joints and  
stooped his back;

He slops along the sidewalk followed by his  
yellow dog,

But he's got a bunch of gold-dust in his  
sack.

He seems a little wistful as he blinks at all  
the lights,

And maybe he is thinking of his claim

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

And the dark and dwarfish cabin where he  
lay and dreamed at nights,  
(Thank God, he'll never see the place  
again!)

Where he lived on tinned tomatoes, beef em-  
balmed and sourdough bread,

On rusty beans and bacon furred with  
mould;

His stomach's out of kilter and his system  
full of lead,

But it's over, and his poke is full of gold.

He has panted at the windlass, he has loaded  
in the drift,

He has pounded at the face of oozy clay;  
He has taxed himself to sickness, dark and  
damp and double shift,

He has labored like a demon night and  
day.

And now, praise God, it's over, and he seems  
to breathe again

Of new-mown hay, the warm, wet, friend-  
ly loam;



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## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

He sees a snowy orchard in a green and  
dimpling plain,  
And a little vine-clad cottage, and it's—  
Home.

### II.

He's the man from Eldorado, and he's had  
a bite and sup,  
And he's met in with a drouthy friend or  
two;  
He's cached away his gold-dust, but he's sort  
of bucking up,  
So he's kept enough to-night to see him  
through.  
His eye is bright and genial, his tongue no  
longer lags;  
His heart is brimming o'er with joy and  
mirth;  
He may be far from savory, he may be clad  
in rags,  
But to-night he feels as if he owns the  
earth.

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## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

Says he: "Boys, here is where the shaggy  
North and I will shake;

I thought I'd never manage to get free.

I kept on making misses; but at last I've got  
my stake;

There's no more thawing frozen muck for  
me.

I am going to God's Country, where I'll live  
the simple life;

I'll buy a bit of land and make a start;

I'll carve a little homestead, and I'll win a  
little wife,

And raise ten little kids to cheer my  
heart."

They signified their sympathy by crowding  
to the bar;

They bellied up three deep and drank his  
health.

He shed a radiant smile around and smoked  
a rank cigar;

They wished him honor, happiness and  
wealth.

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

They drank unto his wife to be—that unsuspecting maid;

They drank unto his children half a score;  
And when they got through drinking, very tenderly they laid

The man from Eldorado on the floor.

### III.

He's the man from Eldorado, and he's only starting in

To cultivate a thousand-dollar jag.

His poke is full of gold-dust and his heart is full of sin,

And he's dancing with a girl called Muck-luck Mag.

She's as light as any fairy; she's as pretty as a peach;

She's mistress of the witchcraft to beguile;  
There's sunshine in her manner, there is music in her speech,

And there's concentrated honey in her smile.

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

Oh, the fever of the dance-hall and the glitter and the shine,

The beauty, and the jewels, and the whirl,

The madness of the music, the rapture of the wine,

The languorous allurements of a girl!

She is like a lost madonna; he is gaunt, unkempt and grim;

But she fondles him and gazes in his eyes;  
Her kisses seek his heavy lips, and soon it seems to him

He has staked a little claim in Paradise.

"Who's for a juicy two-step?" cries the master of the floor;

The music throbs with soft, seductive beat.  
There's glitter, gilt and gladness; there are pretty girls galore;

There's a woolly man with moccasins on feet.

They know they've got him going; he is buying wine for all;

They crowd around as buzzards at a feast,

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

Then when his poke is empty they boost him  
from the hall,  
And spurn him in the gutter like a beast.

He's the man from Eldorado, and he's paint-  
ing red the town ;

Behind he leaves a trail of yellow dust ;  
In a whirl of senseless riot he is ramping up  
and down ;

There's nothing checks his madness and  
his lust.

And soon the word is passed around—it  
travels like a flame ;

They fight to clutch his hand and call him  
friend,

The chevaliers of lost repute, the dames of  
sorry fame ;

Then comes the grim awakening—the end.

### IV.

He's the man from Eldorado and he gives a  
grand affair ;

There's feasting, dancing, wine without  
restraint.

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## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

The smooth Beau Brummels of the bar, the  
faro men, are there ;

The tinhorns and purveyors of red paint ;  
The sleek and painted women, their preda-  
cious eyes aglow—

Sure Klondike City never saw the like ;  
Then Muckluck Mag proposed the toast  
“ The giver of the show,  
The livest sport that ever hit the pike.”

The “ live one ” rises to his feet ; he stam-  
pers to reply—

And then there comes before his muddled  
brain

A vision of green vastitudes beneath an  
April sky,

And clover pastures drenched with silver  
rain.

He knows that it can never be, that he is  
down and out ;

Life leers at him with foul and fetid  
breath ;

And then amid the revelry, the song and  
cheer and shout,

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## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

He suddenly grows grim and cold as death.

He grips the table tensely, and he says:

“Dear friends of mine,

I’ve let you dip your fingers in my purse;

I’ve crammed you at my table, and I’ve  
drowned you in my wine,

And I’ve little left to give you but—my  
curse.

I’ve failed supremely in my plans; it’s rather  
late to whine;

My poke is mighty weasened up and small.

I thank you each for coming here; the hap-  
piness is mine—

And now, you thieves and harlots, take it  
all.”

He twists the thong from off his poke; he  
swings it o’er his head;

The nuggets fall around their feet like  
grain.

They rattle over roof and wall; they scatter,  
roll and spread;

The dust is like a shower of golden rain.

---

## THE MAN FROM ELDORADO

---

The guests a moment stand aghast, then  
grovel on the floor;  
They fight, and snarl, and claw, like beasts  
of prey;  
And then, as everybody grabbed and every-  
body swore,  
The man from Eldorado slipped away.

### V.

He's the man from Eldorado, and they found  
him stiff and dead,  
Half covered by the freezing ooze and  
dirt.  
A clotted Colt was in his hand, a hole was in  
his head,  
And he wore an old and oily buckskin  
shirt.  
His eyes were fixed and horrible, as one who  
hails the end;  
The frost had set him rigid as a log;  
And there, half lying on his breast, his last  
and only friend,  
There crouched and whined a mangy yel-  
low dog.



---

## MY FRIENDS

---

### MY FRIENDS

The man above was a murderer, the man below was a thief;  
And I lay there in the bunk between, ailing  
beyond belief;  
A weary armful of skin and bone, wasted  
with pain and grief.

My feet were froze, and the lifeless toes  
were purple and green and gray;  
The little flesh that clung to my bones, you  
could punch it in holes like clay;  
The skin on my gums was a sullen black, and  
slowly peeling away.

I was sure enough in a direful fix, and often  
I wondered why  
They did not take the chance that was left  
and leave me alone to die,  
Or finish me off with a dose of dope—so  
utterly lost was I.

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## MY FRIENDS

---

But no; they brewed me the green-spruce  
tea, and nursed me there like a child;  
And the homicide he was good to me, and  
bathed my sores and smiled;  
And the thief he starved that I might be fed,  
and his eyes were kind and mild.

Yet they were woefully wicked men, and  
often at night in pain  
I heard the murderer speak of his deed and  
dream it over again;  
I heard the poor thief sorrowing for the dead  
self he had slain.

I'll never forget that bitter dawn, so evil,  
askew and gray,  
When they wrapped me round in the skins of  
beasts and they bore me to a sleigh,  
And we started out with the nearest post an  
hundred miles away.

I'll never forget the trail they broke, with its  
tense, unuttered woe;

---

## MY FRIENDS

---

And the crunch, crunch, crunch as their  
snowshoes sank through the crust of  
the hollow snow;

And my breath would fail, and every beat of  
my heart was like a blow.

And oftentimes I would die the death, yet  
wake up to life anew;

The sun would be all ablaze on the waste,  
and the sky a blighting blue,

And the tears would rise in my snow-blind  
eyes and furrow my cheeks like dew.

And the camps we made when their strength  
outplayed and the day was pinched  
and wan;

And oh, the joy of that blessed halt, and how  
I did dread the dawn;

And how I hated the weary men who rose  
and dragged me on.

And oh, how I begged to rest, to rest—the  
snow was so sweet a shroud;

And oh, how I cried when they urged me on,  
cried and cursed them aloud;

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---

### MY FRIENDS

---

Yet on they strained, all racked and pained,  
and sorely their backs were bowed.

And then it was all like a lurid dream, and I  
prayed for a swift release  
From the ruthless ones who would not leave  
me to die alone in peace;  
Till I wakened up and I found myself at the  
post of the Mounted Police.

And there was my friend the murderer, and  
there was my friend the thief,  
With bracelets of steel around their wrists,  
and wicked beyond belief:  
But when they come to God's judgment  
seat—may I be allowed the brief.

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## THE PROSPECTOR

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### THE PROSPECTOR

I strolled up old Bonanza, where I staked in  
ninety-eight,

A-purpose to revisit the old claim.

I kept thinking mighty sadly of the funny  
ways of Fate,

And the lads who once were with me in  
the game.

Poor boys, they're down-and-outers, and  
there's scarcely one to-day

Can show a dozen colors in his poke;

And me, I'm still prospecting, old and bat-  
tered, gaunt and gray,

And I'm looking for a grub-stake, and I'm  
broke.

I strolled up old Bonanza. The same old  
moon looked down;

The same old landmarks seemed to yearn  
to me;

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## THE PROSPECTOR

---

But the cabins all were silent, and the flat,  
once like a town,  
Was mighty still and lonesome-like to see.

There were piles and piles of tailings where  
we toiled with pick and pan,  
And turning round a bend I heard a roar,  
And there a giant gold-ship of the very new-  
est plan  
Was tearing chunks of pay-dirt from the  
shore.

It wallowed in its water-bed; it burrowed,  
heaved and swung;  
It gnawed its way ahead with grunts and  
sighs;  
Its bill of fare was rock and sand; the tail-  
ings were its dung;  
It glared around with fierce electric eyes.  
Full fifty buckets crammed its maw; it bel-  
lowed out for more;  
It looked like some great monster in the  
gloom.

---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

With two to feed its sateless greed, it worked  
for seven score,  
And I sighed: " Ah, old-time miner, here's  
your doom!"

The idle windlass turns to rust; the sagging  
sluice-box falls;  
The holes you digged are water to the  
brim;  
Your little sod-roofed cabins with the snugly  
moss-chinked walls  
Are deathly now and mouldering and dim.  
The battle-field is silent where of old you  
fought it out;  
The claims you fiercely won are lost and  
sold;  
But there's a little army that they'll never  
put to rout—  
The men who simply live to seek the gold.

The men who can't remember when they  
learned to swing a pack,  
Or in what lawless land the quest began;

---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

The solitary seeker with his grub-stake on  
his back,

The restless buccaneer of pick and  
pan.

On the mesas of the Southland, on the tundras  
of the North,

You will find us, changed in face but still  
the same;

And it isn't need, it isn't greed that sends us  
faring forth—

It's the fever, it's the glory of the game.

For once you've panned the speckled sand  
and seen the bonny dust,

Its peerless brightness blinds you like a  
spell;

It's little else you care about; you go be-  
cause you must,

And you feel that you could follow it to  
hell.

You'd follow it in hunger, and you'd follow  
it in cold;

You'd follow it in solitude and pain;



---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

And when you're stiff and battened down let  
    someone whisper "Gold,"  
You're lief to rise and follow it again.

Yet look you, if I find the stuff it's just like  
    so much dirt;  
I fling it to the four winds like a child.  
It's wine and painted women and the things  
    that do me hurt,  
Till I crawl back, beggared, broken, to the  
    Wild.  
Till I crawl back, sapped and sodden, to my  
    grub-stake and my tent—  
There's a city, there's an army (hear them  
    shout).  
There's the gold in millions, millions, but I  
    haven't got a cent;  
And oh, it's me, it's me that found it out.

It was my dream that made it good, my  
    dream that made me go  
To lands of dread and death disprized of  
    man;

---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

But oh, I've known a glory that their hearts  
will never know,

When I picked the first big nugget from  
my pan.

It's still my dream, my dauntless dream, that  
drives me forth once more

To seek and starve and suffer in the Vast;  
That heaps my heart with eager hope, that  
glimmers on before—

My dream that will uplift me to the last.

Perhaps I am stark crazy, but there's none  
of you too sane;

It's just a little matter of degree.

My hobby is to hunt out gold; it's fortified  
in my brain;

It's life and love and wife and home to me.  
And I'll strike it, yes, I'll strike it; I've a  
hunch I cannot fail;

I've a vision, I've a prompting, I've a call;  
I hear the hoarse stampeding of an army on  
my trail,

To the last, the greatest gold camp of them  
all.

---

## THE PROSPECTOR

---

Beyond the shark-tooth ranges sawing savage  
at the sky

There's a lowering land no white man ever  
struck ;

There's gold, there's gold in millions, and I'll  
find it if I die,

And I'm going there once more to try my  
luck.

Maybe I'll fail—what matter? It's a man-  
date, it's a vow ;

And when in lands of dreariness and dread  
You seek the last lone frontier, far beyond  
your frontiers now,

You will find the old prospector, silent,  
dead.

*You will find a tattered tent-pole with a  
ragged robe below it ;*

*You will find a rusted gold-pan on the  
sod ;*

*You will find the claim I'm seeking, with my  
bones as stakes to show it ;*

*But I've sought the last Recorder, and  
He's—God.*

---

## THE BLACK SHEEP

---

### THE BLACK SHEEP

"The aristocratic ne'er-do-well in Canada frequently finds his way into the ranks of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police."—Extract.

*Hark to the ewe that bore him:*

*"What has muddied the strain?*

*Never his brothers before him*

*Showed the hint of a stain."*

*Hark to the tups and wethers;*

*Hark to the old gray ram:*

*"We're all of us white, but he's black as  
night,*

*And he'll never be worth a damn."*

I'm up on the bally wood-pile at the back of  
the barracks yard;

"A damned disgrace to the force, sir," with  
a comrade standing guard;

Making the bluff I'm busy, doing my six  
months hard.

---

---

## THE BLACK SHEEP

---

“ Six months hard and dismissed, sir.” Isn’t  
that rather hell?

And all because of the liquor laws and the  
wiles of a native belle—

Some “ hooch ” I gave to a siwash brave  
who swore that he wouldn’t tell.

At least they *say* that I did it. It’s so in the  
town report.

All that I can recall is a night of revel and  
sport,

When I woke with a “ head ” in the guard-  
room, and they dragged me sick into  
court.

And the O. C. said: “ You are guilty,” and  
I said never a word ;

For, hang it, you see I couldn’t—I didn’t  
know *what* had occurred,

And, under the circumstances, denial would  
be absurd.

But the one that cooked my bacon was  
Grubbe, of the City Patrol.

---

---

## THE BLACK SHEEP

---

He fagged for my room at Eton, and didn't  
I devil his soul!  
And now he is getting even, landing me  
down in the hole.

Plugging away on the wood-pile; doing  
chores round the square.  
There goes an officer's lady—gives me a  
haughty stare—  
Me that's an earl's own nephew—that is the  
hardest to bear.

To think of the poor old mater awaiting her  
prodigal son.  
Tho' I broke her heart with my folly, I was  
always the white-haired one.  
(That fatted calf that they're cooking will  
surely be overdone.)

I'll go back and yarn to the Bishop; I'll  
dance with the village belle;  
I'll hand round tea to the ladies, and every-  
thing will be well.  
Where I have been won't matter; what I  
have seen I won't tell.

---

## THE BLACK SHEEP

---

I'll soar to their ken like a comet. They'll  
see me with never a stain;  
But will they reform me?—far from it. We  
pay for our pleasure with pain;  
But the dog will return to his vomit, the hog  
to his wallow again.

I've chewed on the rind of creation, and bitter  
I've tasted the same;  
Stacked up against hell and damnation, I've  
managed to stay in the game;  
I've had my moments of sorrow; I've had  
my seasons of shame.

That's past; when one's nature's a cracked  
one, it's too jolly hard to mend.  
So long as the road is level, so long as I've  
cash to spend,  
I'm bound to go to the devil, and it's all the  
same in the end.

The bugle is sounding for stables; the men  
troop off through the gloom;

---

## THE BLACK SHEEP

---

An orderly laying the tables sings in the  
bright mess-room.

(I'll wash in the prison bucket, and brush  
with the prison broom.)

I'll lie in my cell and listen; I'll wish that I  
couldn't hear

The laugh and the chaff of the fellows swig-  
ging the canteen beer;

The nasal tone of the gramophone playing  
"The Bandolier."

And it seems to me, though it's misty, that  
night of the flowing bowl,

That the man who potlatched the whiskey  
and landed me into the hole

*Was Grubbe, that unmerciful bounder,  
Grubbe, of the City Patrol.*



---

## THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

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### THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

I will not wash my face ;  
I will not brush my hair ;  
I " pig " around the place—  
There's nobody to care.  
Nothing but rock and tree ;  
Nothing but wood and stone,  
Oh, God, it's hell to be  
Alone, alone, alone !

Snow-peaks and deep-gashed draws  
Corral me in a ring.  
I feel as if I was  
The only living thing  
On all this blighted earth ;  
And so I frowst and shrink,  
And crouching by my hearth  
I hear the thoughts I think.

---

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## THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

---

I think of all I miss—  
The boys I used to know;  
The girls I used to kiss;  
The coin I used to blow;  
The bars I used to haunt;  
The racket and the row;  
The beers I didn't want  
(I wish I had 'em now).

Day after day the same,  
Only a little worse;  
No one to grouch or blame—  
Oh, for a loving curse!  
Oh, in the night I fear,  
Haunted by nameless things,  
Just for a voice to cheer,  
Just for a hand that clings!

Faintly as from a star  
Voices come o'er the line;  
Voices of ghosts afar,  
Not in this world of mine;

---

## THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

---

Lives in whose loom I grope;  
Words in whose weft I hear  
Eager the thrill of hope,  
Awful the chill of fear.

I'm thinking out aloud;  
I reckon that is bad;  
(The snow is like a shroud)—  
Maybe I'm going mad.  
Say! wouldn't that be tough?  
This awful hush that hugs  
And chokes one is enough  
To make a man go "bugs."

There's not a thing to do;  
I cannot sleep at night;  
No wonder I'm so blue;  
Oh, for a friendly fight!  
The din and rush of strife;  
A music-hall aglow;  
A crowd, a city, life—  
Dear God, I miss it so!

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---

## THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

---

Here, you have moped enough!

Brace up and play the game!

But say, it's awful tough—

Day after day the same

(I've said that twice, I bet).

Well, there's not much to say.

I wish I had a pet,

Or something I could play.

Cheer up! don't get so glum

And sick of everything;

The worst is yet to come;

God help you till the Spring.

God shield you from the Fear;

Teach you to laugh, not moan.

Ha! ha! it sounds so queer—

Alone, alone, alone!

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THE WOOD-CUTTER

---

THE WOOD-CUTTER

*The sky is like an envelope,  
One of those blue official things;  
And, sealing it, to mock our hope,  
The moon, a silver wafer, clings.  
What shall we find when death gives leave  
To read—our sentence or reprieve?*

I'm holding it down on God's scrap-pile, up  
on the fag-end of earth;  
O'er me a menace of mountains, a river  
that grits at my feet;  
Face to face with my soul-self, weighing my  
life at its worth;  
Wondering what I was made for, here in  
my last retreat.

Last! Ah, yes, it's the finish. Have ever  
you heard a man cry?  
(Sobs that rake him and rend him, right  
from the base of the chest.)

---

## THE WOOD-CUTTER

---

That's how I've cried, oh, so often; and now  
that my tears are dry,  
I sit in the desolate quiet and wait for the  
infinite Rest.

Rest! Well, it's restful around me; it's quiet  
clean to the core.

The mountains pose in their ermine, in  
golden the hills are clad;  
The big, blue, silt-freighted Yukon seethes  
by my cabin door,  
And I think it's only the river that keeps  
me from going mad.

By day it's a ruthless monster, a callous, in-  
satiated thing,  
With oily bubble and eddy, with sudden  
swirling of breast;  
By night it's a writhing Titan, sullenly mur-  
muring,  
Ever and ever goaded, and ever crying for  
rest.

---

## THE WOOD-CUTTER

---

It cries for its human tribute, but me it will  
never drown.

I've learned the lore of my river; my river  
obeys me well.

I hew and I launch my cordwood, and raft  
it to Dawson town,

Where wood means wine and women, and,  
incidentally, hell.

Hell and the anguish thereafter. Here as I  
sit alone

I'd give the life I have left me to lighten  
some load of care:

(The bitterest part of the bitter is being  
denied to atone;

Lips that have mocked at Heaven lend them-  
selves ill to prayer.)

*Impotent as a beetle pierced on the needle of  
Fate;*

*A wretch in a cosmic death-cell, peaks for  
my prison bars;*

---

## THE WOOD-CUTTER

---

*Whelmed by a world stupendous, lonely and  
listless I wait,  
Drowned in a sea of silence, strewn with  
confetti of stars.*

See! from far up the valley a rapier pierces  
the night,

The white search-ray of a steamer. Swift-  
ly, serenely it nears;

A proud, white, alien presence, a glittering  
galley of light,

Confident-poised, triumphant, freighted  
with hopes and fears.

I look as one looks on a vision; I see it pul-  
sating by;

I glimpse joy-radiant faces; I hear the  
thresh of the wheel.

Hoof-like my heart beats a moment; then  
silence swoops from the sky.

Darkness is piled upon darkness. God  
only knows how I feel.



---

## THE WOOD-CUTTER

---

Maybe you've seen me sometimes; maybe  
you've pitied me then—

The lonely waif of the wood-camp, here  
by my cabin door.

Some day you'll look and see not; futile and  
outcast of men,

I shall be far from your pity, resting for-  
evermore.

*My life was a problem in ciphers, a weary  
and profitless sum.*

*Slipshod and stupid I worked it, dazed by  
negation and doubt.*

*Ciphers the total confronts me. Oh, Death,  
with thy moistened thumb,*

*Stoop like a petulant schoolboy, wipe me  
forever out!*

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THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

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THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-  
ORGAN

(With apologies to the singer of the "Song of the  
Banjo.")

I'm a homely little bit of tin and bone;  
I'm beloved by the Legion of the Lost;  
I haven't got a "vox humana" tone,  
And a dime or two will satisfy my cost.  
I don't attempt your high-falutin' flights;  
I am more or less uncertain on the key;  
But I tell you, boys, there's lots and lots of  
nights  
When you've taken mighty comfort out of  
me.

I weigh an ounce or two, and I'm so small  
You can pack me in the pocket of your  
vest;  
And when at night so wearily you crawl  
Into your bunk and stretch your limbs to  
rest,

---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

---

You take me out and play me soft and low,  
The simple songs that trouble your heart-  
strings ;

The tunes you used to fancy long ago,  
Before you made a rotten mess of things.

Then a dreamy look will come into your eyes,  
And you break off in the middle of a note ;  
And then, with just the dreariest of sighs,

You drop me in the pocket of your coat.  
But somehow I have bucked you up a bit ;  
And, as you turn around and face the wall,  
You don't feel quite so spineless and unfit—  
You're not so bad a fellow after all.

Do you recollect the bitter Arctic night ;  
Your camp beside the canyon on the trail ;  
Your tent a tiny square of orange light ;  
The moon above consumptive-like and  
pale ;  
Your supper cooked, your little stove aglow ;  
You tired, but snug and happy as a child ?

---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

---

Then 'twas "Turkey in the Straw" till your  
lips were nearly raw,  
And you hurled your bold defiance at the  
Wild.

Do you recollect the flashing, lashing pain;  
The gulf of humid blackness overhead;  
The lightning making rapiers of the rain;  
The cattle-horns like candles of the dead  
You sitting on your bronco there alone,  
In your slicker, saddle-sore and sick with  
cold?  
Do you think the silent herd did not hear  
"The Mocking Bird,"  
Or relish "Silver Threads among the  
Gold"?

Do you recollect the wild Magellan coast;  
The head-winds and the icy, roaring seas;  
The nights you thought that everything was  
lost;  
The days you toiled in water to your  
knees;

---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

---

The frozen ratlines shrieking in the gale;  
The hissing steeps and gulfs of livid foam:  
When you cheered your messmates nine with  
    “Ben Bolt” and “Clementine,”  
And “Dixie Land” and “Seeing Nellie  
    Home”?

Let the jammy banjo voice the Younger Son,  
    Who waits for his remittance to arrive;  
I represent the grimy, gritty one,  
    Who sweats his bones to keep himself  
        alive;  
Who's up against the real thing from his  
    birth;  
    Whose heritage is hard and bitter toil;  
I voice the weary, smeary ones of earth,  
    The helots of the sea and of the soil.

I'm the Steinway of strange mischief and  
    mischance;  
    I'm the Stradivarius of blank defeat;  
In the down-world, when the devil leads the  
    dance,  
I am simply and symbolically meet;

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---

## THE SONG OF THE MOUTH-ORGAN

---

I'm the irrepressive spirit of mankind;  
I'm the small boy playing knuckle-down  
with Death;  
At the end of all things known, where God's  
rubbish-heap is thrown,  
I shrill impudent triumph at a breath.

I'm a humble little bit of tin and horn;  
I'm a byword, I'm a plaything, I'm a jest;  
The virtuoso looks on me with scorn;  
But there's times when I am better than  
the best.

Ask the stoker and the sailor of the sea;  
Ask the mucker and the hewer of the pine;  
Ask the herder of the plain, ask the gleaner  
of the grain—  
There's a lowly, loving kingdom—and it's  
mine.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

### THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

#### I.

Gold! We leapt from our benches. Gold!  
We sprang from our stools.  
Gold! We wheeled in the furrow, fired with  
the faith of fools.  
Fearless, unfound, unfitted, far from the  
night and the cold,  
Heard we the clarion summons, followed the  
master-lure—Gold!

Men from the sands of the Sunland; men  
from the woods of the West;  
Men from the farms and the cities, into the  
Northland we pressed.  
Graybeards and striplings and women, good  
men and bad men and bold,  
Leaving our homes and our loved ones, cry-  
ing exultantly—"Gold!"

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Never was seen such an army, pitiful, futile,  
unfit;

Never was seen such a spirit, manifold courage  
and grit.

Never has been such a cohort under one  
banner unrolled

As surged to the ragged-edged Arctic, urged  
by the arch-tempter—Gold.

“Farewell!” we cried to our dearests; little  
we cared for their tears.

“Farewell!” we cried to the humdrum and  
the yoke of the hireling years;

Just like a pack of school-boys, and the big  
crowd cheered us good-bye.

Never were hearts so uplifted, never were  
hopes so high.

The spectral shores flitted past us, and every  
whirl of the screw

Hurled us nearer to fortune, and ever we  
planned what we'd do—



---

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Do with the gold when we got it—big, shiny  
nuggets like plums,  
There in the sand of the river, gouging it out  
with our thumbs.

And one man wanted a castle, another a rac-  
ing stud;  
A third would cruise in a palace yacht like a  
red-necked prince of blood.  
And so we dreamed and we vaunted, million-  
aires to a man,  
Leaping to wealth in our visions long ere the  
trail began.

### II.

We landed in wind-swept Skagway. We  
joined the weltering mass,  
Clamoring over their outfits, waiting to climb  
the Pass.  
We tightened our girths and our pack-  
straps; we linked on the Human  
Chain,  
Struggling up to the summit, where every  
step was a pain.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Gone was the joy of our faces, grim and  
haggard and pale;  
The heedless mirth of the shipboard was  
changed to the care of the trail.  
We flung ourselves in the struggle, packing  
our grub in relays,  
Step by step to the summit in the bale of the  
winter days.

Floundering deep in the sump-holes, stum-  
bling out again;  
Crying with cold and weakness, crazy with  
fear and pain.  
Then from the depths of our travail, ere our  
spirits were broke,  
Grim, tenacious and savage, the lust of the  
trail awoke.

"Klondike or bust!" rang the slogan; every  
man for his own.  
Oh, how we flogged the horses, staggering  
skin and bone!

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Oh, how we cursed their weakness, anguish  
they could not tell,  
Breaking their hearts in our passion, lashing  
them on till they fell!

For grub meant gold to our thinking, and all  
that could walk must pack;  
The sheep for the shambles stumbled, each  
with a load on its back;  
And even the swine were burdened, and  
grunted and squealed and rolled,  
And men went mad in the moment, huskily  
clamoring "Gold!"

Oh, we were brutes and devils, goaded by  
lust and fear!  
Our eyes were strained to the summit; the  
weaklings dropped to the rear,  
Falling in heaps by the trail-side, heart-  
broken, limp and wan;  
But the gaps closed up in an instant, and  
heedless the chain went on.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Never will I forget it, there on the mountain  
face,

Antlike, men with their burdens, clinging in  
icy space;

Dogged, determined and dauntless, cruel and  
callous and cold,

Cursing, blaspheming, reviling, and ever that  
battle-cry—"Gold!"

Thus toiled we, the army of fortune, in hun-  
ger and hope and despair,

Till glacier, mountain and forest vanished,  
and, radiantly fair,

There at our feet lay Lake Bennett, and  
down to its welcome we ran:

The trail of the land was over, the trail of  
the water began.

### III.

We built our boats and we launched them.

Never has been such a fleet;

A packing-case for a bottom, a mackinaw for  
a sheet.

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## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

Shapeless, grotesque, lopsided, flimsy, make-  
shift and crude,  
Each man after his fashion builded as best  
he could.

Each man worked like a demon, as prow to  
rudder we raced;  
The winds of the Wild cried "Hurry!" the  
voice of the waters, "Haste!"  
We hated those driving before us; we  
dreaded those pressing behind;  
We cursed the slow current that bore us; we  
prayed to the God of the wind.

Spring! and the hillsides flourished, vivid in  
jewelled green;  
Spring! and our hearts' blood nourished  
envy and hatred and spleen.  
Little cared we for the Spring-birth; much  
cared we to get on—  
Stake in the Great White Channel, stake ere  
the best be gone.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

The greed of the gold possessed us; pity and  
love were forgot;  
Covetous visions obsessed us; brother with  
brother fought.  
Partner with partner wrangled, each one  
claiming his due;  
Wrangled and halved their outfits, sawing  
their boats in two.

Thuswise we voyaged Lake Bennett, Tagish,  
then Windy Arm,  
Sinister, savage and baleful, boding us hate  
and harm.  
Many a scow was shattered there on that  
iron shore;  
Many a heart was broken straining at sweep  
and oar.

We roused Lake Marsh with a chorus, we  
drifted many a mile;  
There was the canyon before us—cave-like  
its dark defile;

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

The shores swept faster and faster; the river  
narrowed to wrath;  
Waters that hissed disaster reared upright in  
our path.

Beneath us the green tumult churning, above  
us the cavernous gloom;  
Around us, swift twisting and turning, the  
black, sullen walls of a tomb.  
We spun like a chip in a mill-race; our  
hearts hammered under the test;  
Then—oh, the relief on each chill face!—we  
soared into sunlight and rest.

Hand sought for hand on the instant. Cried  
we, "Our troubles are o'er!"  
Then, like a rumble of thunder, heard we a  
canorous roar.  
Leaping and boiling and seething, saw we a  
cauldron afume;  
There was the rage of the rapids, there was  
the menace of doom.

---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

The river springs like a racer, sweeps  
through a gash in the rock;  
Buts at the boulder-ribbed bottom, staggers  
and rears at the shock;  
Leaps like a terrified monster, writhes in its  
fury and pain;  
Then with the crash of a demon springs to  
the onset again.

Dared we that ravening terror; heard we its  
din in our ears;  
Called on the Gods of our fathers, juggled  
forlorn with our fears;  
Sank to our waists in its fury, tossed to the  
sky like a fleece;  
Then, when our dread was the greatest,  
crashed into safety and peace.

But what of the others that followed, losing  
their boats by the score?  
Well could we see them and hear them,  
strung down that desolate shore.



---

## THE TRAIL OF NINETY-EIGHT

---

What of the poor souls that perished? Little  
of them shall be said—

On to the Golden Valley, pause not to bury  
the dead.

Then there were days of drifting, breezes  
soft as a sigh;

Night trailed her robe of jewels over the  
floor of the sky.

The moonlit stream was a python, silver,  
sinuous, vast,

That writhed on a shroud of velvet—well, it  
was done at last.

There were the tents of Dawson, there the  
scar of the slide;

Swiftly we poled o'er the shallows, swiftly  
leapt o'er the side.

Fires fringed the mouth of Bonanza; sunset  
gilded the dome;

The test of the trail was over—thank God,  
thank God, we were Home!

---

## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

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### THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

*He was an old prospector with a vision  
bleared and dim.*

*He asked me for a grubstake, and the same  
I gave to him.*

*He hinted of a hidden trove, and when I  
made so bold*

*To question his veracity, this is the tale he  
told.*

*"I do not seek the copper streak, nor yet the  
yellow dust;*

*I am not fain for sake of gain to irk the  
frozen crust;*

*Let fellows gross find gilded dross, far other  
is my mark;*

*Oh, gentle youth, this is the truth—I go to  
seek the Ark.*

---

---

## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

---

"I prospected the Pelly bed, I prospected  
the White;  
The Nordenscöld for love of gold I piked  
from morn till night;  
Afar and near for many a year I led the wild  
stampede,  
Until I guessed that all my quest was vanity  
and greed.

"Then came I to a land I knew no man had  
ever seen,  
A haggard land, forlornly spanned by moun-  
tains lank and lean;  
The nitchies said 'twas full of dread, of  
smoke and fiery breath,  
And no man dare put foot in there for fear  
of pain and death.

"But I was made all unafraid, so, careless  
and alone,  
Day after day I made my way into that land  
unknown;

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## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

---

Night after night by camp-fire light I  
    crouched in lonely thought;  
Oh, gentle youth, this is the truth—I knew  
    not what I sought.

“I rose at dawn; I wandered on. ’Tis  
    somewhat fine and grand  
To be alone and hold your own in God’s vast  
    awesome land;  
Come woe or weal, ’tis fine to feel a hundred  
    miles between  
The trails you dare and pathways where the  
    feet of men have been.

“And so it fell on me a spell of wander-lust  
    was cast.  
The land was still and strange and chill, and  
    cavernous and vast;  
And sad and dead, and dull as lead, the val-  
    leys sought the snows;  
And far and wide on every side the ashen  
    peaks arose.

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## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN.

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"The moon was like a silent spike that  
pierced the sky right through;  
The small stars popped and winked and  
hopped in vastitudes of blue;  
And unto me for company came creatures of  
the shade,  
And formed in rings and whispered things  
that made me half afraid.

"And strange though be, 'twas borne on me  
that land had lived of old,  
And men had crept and slain and slept where  
now they toiled for gold;  
Through jungles dim the mammoth grim had  
sought the oozy fen,  
And on his track, all bent of back, had  
crawled the hairy men.

"And furthermore, strange deeds of yore in  
this dead place were done.  
They haunted me, as wild and free I roamed  
from sun to sun;

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## THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

---

Until I came where sudden flame uplit a terraced height,  
A regnant peak that seemed to seek the coronal of night.

“ I scaled the peak ; my heart was weak, yet on and on I pressed.  
Skyward I strained until I gained its dazzling silver crest ;  
And there I found, with all around a world supine and stark,  
Swept clean of snow, a flat plateau, and on it lay—the Ark.

“ Yes, there, I knew, by two and two the beasts did disembark,  
And so in haste I ran and traced in letter on the Ark  
My human name—Ben Smith’s the same  
And now I want to float  
A syndicate to haul and freight to town the noble boat.”

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THE BALLAD OF GUM-BOOT BEN

---

*I met him later in a bar and made a gay re-  
mark*

*Anent an ancient miner and an option on the  
Ark.*

*He gazed at me reproachfully, as only toppers  
can;*

*But what he said I can't repeat—he was a  
bad old man.*

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CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED  
POLICE

In the little Crimson Manual it's written  
plain and clear,  
That who would wear the scarlet coat shall  
say good-bye to fear;  
Shall be a guardian of the right, a sleuth-  
hound of the trail—  
In the little Crimson Manual there's no such  
word as "fail"—  
Shall follow on though heavens fall, or hell's  
top-turrets freeze,  
Half round the world, if need there be, on  
bleeding hands and knees.  
It's duty, duty, first and last, the Crimson  
Manual saith;  
The Scarlet Rider makes reply: "It's duty—  
to the death."  
And so they sweep the solitudes, free men  
from all the earth;



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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

And so they sentinel the woods, the wilds  
that know their worth;  
And so they scour the startled plains and  
mock at hurt and pain,  
And read their Crimson Manual, and find  
their duty plain.  
Knights of the lists of unrenown, born of the  
frontier's need,  
Disdainful of the spoken word, exultant in  
the deed;  
Unconscious heroes of the waste, proud play-  
ers of the game,  
Props of the power behind the throne, up-  
holders of the name:  
For thus the Great White Chief hath said,  
"In all my lands be peace,"  
And to maintain his word he gave his West  
the Scarlet Police.

Livid-lipped was the valley, still as the grave  
of God;

Misty shadows of mountain thinned into  
mists of cloud;

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Corpselike and stark was the land, with a  
quiet that crushed and awed,  
And the stars of the weird sub-arctic  
glimmered over its shroud.

Deep in the trench of the valley two men  
stationed the Post,  
Seymour and Clancy the reckless, fresh  
from the long patrol;  
Seymour, the sergeant, and Clancy—Clancy  
who made his boast  
He could cinch like a bronco the North-  
land, and cling to the prongs of the  
Pole.

Two lone men on detachment, standing for  
law on the trail;  
Undismayed in the vastness, wise with the  
wisdom of old—  
Out of the night hailed a half-breed telling a  
pitiful tale,  
“White man starving and crazy on the  
banks of the Nordenscold.”

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Up sprang the red-haired Clancy, lean and  
eager of eye ;  
Loaded the long toboggan, strapped each  
dog at its post ;  
Whirled his lash at the leader ; then, with a  
whoop and a cry,  
Into the Great White Silence faded away  
like a ghost.

The clouds were a misty shadow, the hills  
were a shadowy mist ;  
Sunless, voiceless and pulseless, the day  
was a dream of woe ;  
Through the ice-rifts the river smoked and  
bubbled and hissed ;  
Behind was a trail fresh broken, in front  
the untrodden snow.

Ahead of the dogs ploughed Clancy, haloed  
by steaming breath ;  
Through peril of open water, through ache  
of insensate cold ;

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Up rivers wantonly winding in a land affianced to death,  
Till he came to a cowering cabin on the banks of the Nordenscold.

Then Clancy loosed his revolver, and he strode through the open door;  
And there was the man he sought for, crouching beside the fire;  
The hair of his beard was singeing, the frost on his back was hoar,  
And ever he crooned and chanted as if he never would tire:—

*"I panned and I panned in the shiny sand,  
and I sniped on the river bar;  
But I know, I know, that it's down below  
that the golden treasures are;  
So I'll wait and wait till the floods abate, and  
I'll sink a shaft once more,  
And I'd like to bet that I'll go home yet with  
a brass band playing before."*

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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

He was nigh as thin as a sliver, and he  
whined like a Moose-hide cur;

So Clancy clothed him and nursed him as  
a mother nurses a child;

Lifted him on the toboggan, wrapped him in  
robes of fur,

Then with the dogs sore straining started  
to face the Wild.

Said the Wild, "I will crush this Clancy, so  
fearless and insolent;

For him will I loose my fury, and blind  
and buffet and beat;

Pile up my snows to stay him; then when  
his strength is spent,

Leap on him from my ambush and crush  
him under my feet.

"Him will I ring with my silence, compass  
him with my cold;

Closer and closer clutch him unto mine icy  
breast;

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CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Buffet him with my blizzards, deep in my  
    snows enfold,  
    Claiming his life as my tribute, giving my  
    wolves the rest."

Clancy crawled through the vastness; o'er  
    him the hate of the Wild;  
    Full on his face fell the blizzard; cheering  
    his huskies he ran;  
Fighting, fierce-hearted and tireless, snows  
    that drifted and piled,  
    With ever and ever behind him singing the  
    crazy man.

*"Sing hey, sing ho, for the ice and snow,  
    And a heart that's ever merry;  
Let us trim and square with a lover's care  
    (For why should a man be sorry?)  
A grave deep, deep, with the moon a-peep,  
    A grave in the frozen mould.  
Sing hey, sing ho, for the winds that blow,  
And a grave deep down in the ice and snow,  
    A grave in the land of gold."*

---

## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Day after day of darkness, the whirl of the  
seething snows;

Day after day of blindness, the swoop of  
the stinging blast;

On through a blur of fury the swing of stag-  
gering blows;

On through a world of turmoil, empty, in-  
ane and vast.

Night with its writhing storm-whirl, night  
despairingly black;

Night with its hours of terror, numb and  
endlessly long;

Night with its weary waiting, fighting the  
shadows back,

And ever the crouching madman singing  
his crazy song.

Cold with its creeping terror, cold with its  
sudden clinch;

Cold so utter you wonder if 'twill ever  
again be warm;

---

## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Clancy grinned as he shuddered, "Surely it  
isn't a cinch  
Being wet-nurse to a looney in the teeth of  
an arctic storm."

The blizzard passed and the dawn broke,  
knife-edged and crystal clear;  
The sky was a blue-domed iceberg, sun-  
shine outlawed away;  
Ever by snowslide and ice-rip haunted and  
hovered the Fear;  
Ever the Wild malignant poised and pant-  
ed to slay.

The lead-dog freezes in harness—cut him  
out of the team!  
The lung of the wheel-dog's bleeding—  
shoot him and let him lie!  
On and on with the others—lash them until  
they scream!  
"Pull for your lives, you devils! On! To  
halt is to die."



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## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

There in the frozen vastness Clancy fought  
with his foes ;

The ache of the stiffened fingers, the cut  
of the snowshoe thong ;

Cheeks black-raw through the hood-flap, eyes  
that tingled and closed,

And ever to urge and cheer him quavered  
the madman's song.

Colder it grew and colder, till the last heat  
left the earth,

And there in the great stark stillness the  
bale fires glinted and gleamed,

And the Wild all around exulted and shook  
with a devilish mirth,

And life was far and forgotten, the ghost  
of a joy once dreamed.

Death! And one who defied it, a man of the  
Mounted Police ;

Fought it there to a standstill long after  
hope was gone ;

---

## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

Grinned through his bitter anguish, fought  
without let or cease,  
Suffering, straining, striving, stumbling,  
struggling on.

Till the dogs lay down in their traces, and  
rose and staggered and fell;

Till the eyes of him dimmed with shadows,  
and the trail was so hard to see;

Till the Wild howled out triumphant, and the  
world was a frozen hell—

Then said Constable Clancy: "I guess  
that it's up to me."

Far down the trail they saw him, and his  
hands they were blanched like bone;

His face was a blackened horror, from his  
eyelids the salt rheum ran;

His feet he was lifting strangely, as if they  
were made of stone,

But safe in his arms and sleeping he car-  
ried the crazy man.

---

## CLANCY OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

---

So Clancy got into Barracks, and the boys  
made rather a scene;

And the O. C. called him a hero, and was  
nice as a man could be;

But Clancy gazed down his trousers at the  
place where his toes had been,

And then he howled like a husky, and sang  
in a shaky key:

*"When I go back to the old love that's true  
to the finger-tips,*

*I'll say: 'Here's bushels of gold, love,' and  
I'll kiss my girl on the lips;*

*'It's yours to have and to hold, love.' It's  
the proud, proud boy I'll be,*

*When I go back to the old love that's waited  
so long for me."*

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## LOST

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## LOST

*"Black is the sky, but the land is white—  
(O the wind, the snow and the storm!)—  
Father, where is our boy to-night?  
Pray to God he is safe and warm."*

*"Mother, mother, why should you fear?  
Safe is he, and the Arctic moon  
Over his cabin shines so clear—  
Rest and sleep, 'twill be morning soon."*

*"It's getting dark awful sudden. Say, this  
is mighty queer!  
Where in the world have I got to? It's  
still and black as a tomb.  
I reckoned the camp was yonder, I figured  
the trail was here—  
Nothing! Just draw and valley packed  
with quiet and gloom;*

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## LOST

---

Snow that comes down like feathers, thick  
and gobby and gray;  
Night that looks spiteful ugly—seems that  
I've lost my way.

“The cold's got an edge like a jackknife—it  
must be forty below;  
Leastways that's what it seems like—it  
cuts so fierce to the bone.  
The wind's getting real ferocious; it's heav-  
ing and whirling the snow;  
It shrieks with a howl of fury, it dies away  
to a moan;  
Its arms sweep round like a banshee's, swift  
and icily white,  
And buffet and blind and beat me. Lord!  
it's a hell of a night.

“I'm all tangled up in a blizzard. There's  
only one thing to do—  
Keep on moving and moving; it's death,  
it's death if I rest.

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LOST

---

Oh, God! if I see the morning, if only I  
struggle through,

I'll say the prayers I've forgotten since I  
lay on my mother's breast.

I seem going round in a circle; maybe the  
camp is near,

Say! did somebody holler? Was it a light  
I saw?

Or was it only a notion? I'll shout, and  
maybe they'll hear—

No! the wind only drowns me—shout till  
my throat is raw.

“The boys are all round the camp-fire won-  
dering when I'll be back.

They'll soon be starting to seek me; they'll  
scarcely wait for the light.

What will they find, I wonder, when they  
come to the end of my track—

A hand stuck out of a snowdrift, frozen  
and stiff and white.

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LOST

---

That's what they'll strike, I reckon; that's  
how they'll find their pard,  
A pie-faced corpse in a snowbank—curse  
you, don't be a fool!  
Play the game to the finish; bet on your very  
last card;  
Nerve yourself for the struggle. Oh, you  
coward, keep cool!

“ I'm going to lick this blizzard; I'm going  
to live the night.  
It can't down me with its bluster—I'm not  
the kind to be beat.  
On hands and knees will I buck it; with  
every breath will I fight;  
It's life, it's life that I fight for—never it  
seemed so sweet.  
I know that my face is frozen; my hands are  
numblike and dead;  
But oh, my feet keep a-moving, heavy and  
hard and slow;  
They're trying to kill me, kill me, the night  
that's black overhead,

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---

## LOST

---

The wind that cuts like a razor, the whip-  
cord lash of the snow.

“Keep a-moving, a-moving; don’t, don’t  
stumble, you fool!

Curse this snow that’s a-piling a-purpose  
to block my way.

It’s heavy as gold in the rocker, it’s white  
and fleecy as wool;

It’s soft as a bed of feathers, it’s warm as  
a stack of hay.

Curse on my feet that slip so, my poor, tired,  
stumbling feet—

I guess they’re a job for the surgeon, they  
feel so queerlike to lift—

I’ll rest them just for a moment—oh, but to  
rest is sweet!

The awful wind cannot get me, deep, deep  
down in the drift.”

*“Father, a bitter cry I heard,*

*Out of the night so dark and wild.*

*Why is my heart so strangely stirred?*

*’Twas like the voice of our erring child.”*



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LOST

---

*"Mother, mother, you only heard  
A waterfowl in the locked lagoon—  
Out of the night a wounded bird—  
Rest and sleep, 'twill be morning soon."*

"Who is it talks of sleeping? I'll swear that  
somebody shook  
Me hard by the arm for a moment, but  
how on earth could it be?  
See how my feet are moving—awfully funny  
they look—  
Moving as if they belonged to a someone  
that wasn't me.  
The wind down the night's long alley bowls  
me down like a pin;  
I stagger and fall and stagger, crawl arm-  
deep in the snow.  
Beaten back to my corner, how can I hope to  
win?  
And there is the blizzard waiting to give me  
the knockout blow.

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LOST

---

" Oh, I'm so warm and sleepy! No more  
hunger and pain.

Just to rest for a moment; was ever rest  
such a joy?

Ha! what was that? I'll swear it, somebody  
shook me again;

Somebody seemed to whisper: 'Fight to  
the last, my boy.'

Fight! That's right, I must struggle. I  
know that to rest means death;

Death, but then what does death mean?—  
ease from a world of strife.

Life has been none too pleasant; yet with  
my failing breath

Still and still must I struggle, fight for the  
gift of life.

\* \* \* \* \*

" Seems that I must be dreaming! Here is  
the old home trail;

Yonder a light is gleaming; oh, I know it  
so well!

---

---

LOST

---

The air is scented with clover; the cattle  
wait by the rail;  
Father is through with the milking; there  
goes the supper-bell.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Mother, your boy is crying, out in the  
night and cold;

Let me in and forgive me, I'll never be  
bad any more:

I'm, oh, so sick and so sorry: please, dear  
mother, don't scold—

It's just your boy, and he wants you. . . .  
Mother, open the door. . . .”

*“Father, father, I saw a face*

*Pressed just now to the window-pane!*

*Oh, it gazed for a moment's space,*

*Wild and wan, and was gone again!”*

*“Mother, mother, you saw the snow*

*Drifted down from the maple tree*

*(Oh, the wind that is sobbing so!*

*Weary and worn and old are we)—*

*Only the snow and a wounded loon—*

*Rest and sleep, 'twill be morning soon.”*

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## L'ENVOI

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## L'ENVOI

*We talked of yesteryears, of trails and  
treasure,*

*Of men who played the game and lost or  
won;*

*Of mad stampedes, of toil beyond all meas-  
ure,*

*Of camp-fire comfort when the day was  
done.*

*We talked of sullen nights by moon-dogs  
haunted,*

*Of bird and beast and tree, of rod and  
gun;*

*Of boat and tent, of hunting-trip enchanted  
Beneath the wonder of the midnight sun;  
Of bloody-footed dogs that gnawed the  
traces,*

*Of prisoned seas, wind-lashed and winter-  
locked:*

---

## L'ENVOI

---

*The ice-gray dawn was pale upon our faces,  
Yet still we filled the cup and still we  
talked.*

*The city street was dimmed. We saw the  
glitter  
Of moon-picked brilliants on the virgin  
snow,  
And down the drifted canyon heard the bit-  
ter,  
Relentless slogan of the winds of woe.  
The city was forgot, and, parka-skirted,  
We trod that leagueless land that once we  
knew;  
We saw stream past, down valleys glacier-  
girted,  
The wolf-worn legions of the caribou.  
We smoked our pipes, o'er scenes of triumph  
dwelling;  
Of deeds of daring, dire defeats, we  
talked;  
And other tales that lost not in the telling,  
Ere to our beds uncertainly we walked.*

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L'ENVOI

---

*And so, dear friends, in gentler valleys  
roaming,*

*Perhaps, when on my printed page you  
look,*

*Your fancies by the firelight may go homing  
To that lone land that haply you forsook.*

*And if perchance you hear the silence calling,  
The frozen music of star-yearning heights,  
Or, dreaming, see the seines of silver traw-  
ling*

*Across the sky's abyss on vasty nights,  
You may recall that sweep of savage splen-  
dor,*

*That land that measures each man at his  
worth,*

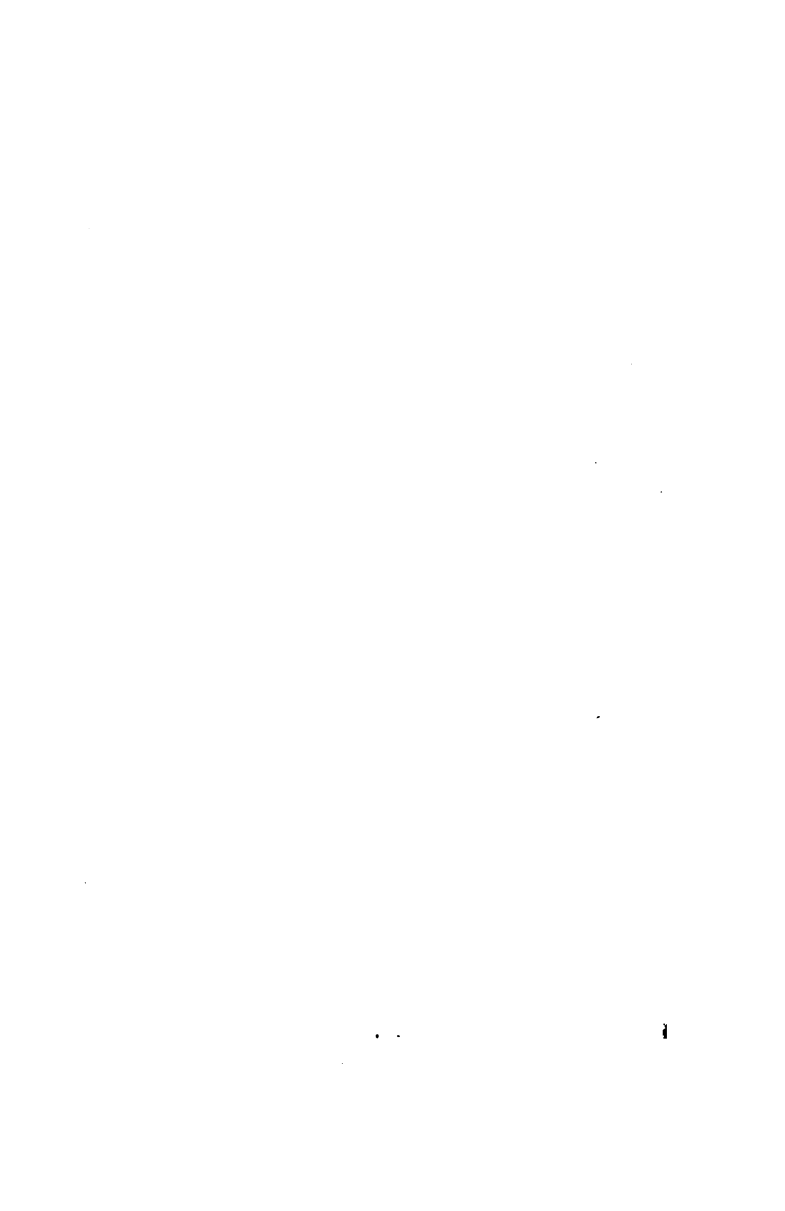
*And feel in memory, half fierce, half tender,  
The brotherhood of men that know the  
North.*















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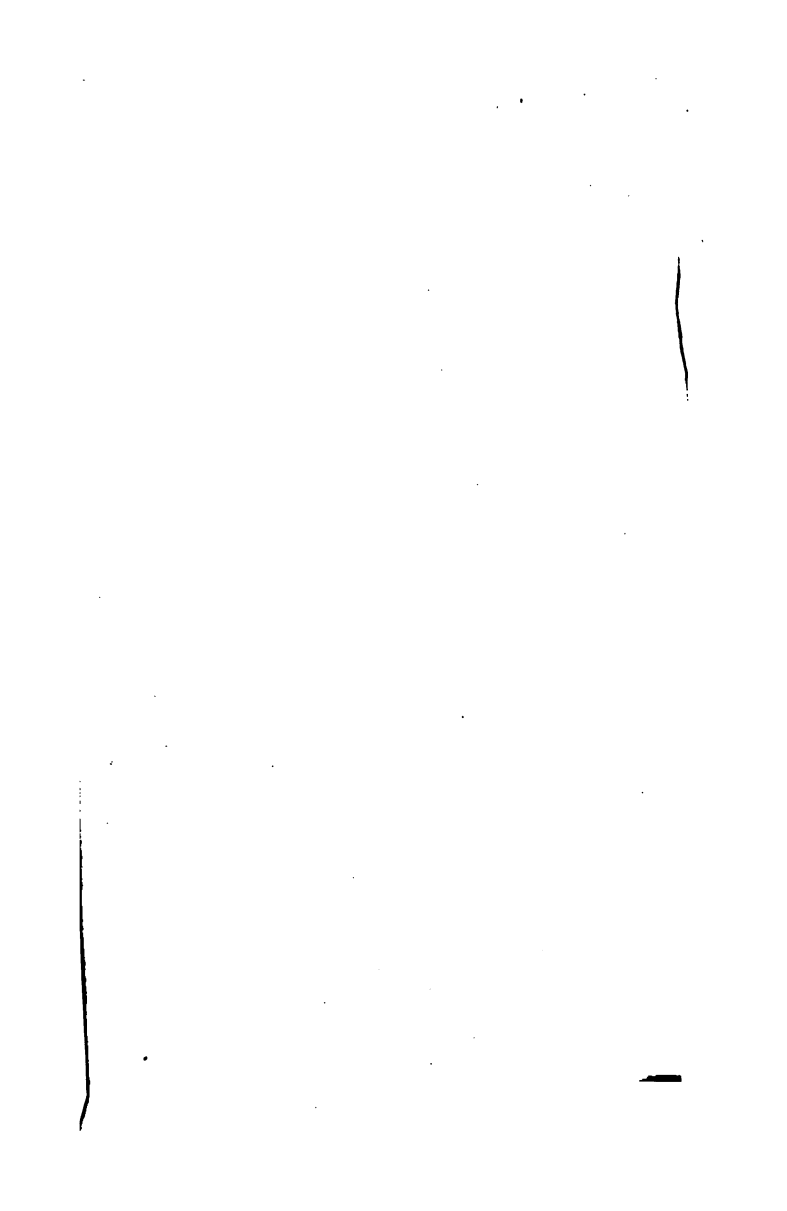
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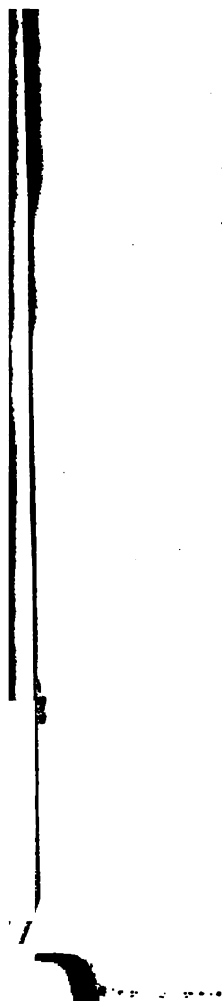
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